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THE SILVER KINGS  
of ARANSAS PASS  
*and Other Stories*

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Mrs. Richard L. Sutton and her boatmen, Captain Arthur Fletcher and his son, Norman, at Tuhua Island, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand

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# THE SILVER KINGS of ARANSAS PASS *and Other Stories*

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*By*

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An African Holiday; An Arctic Safari;  
The Long Trek, Around the World  
With Camera and Rifle, etc.

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by  
RICHARD L. SUTTON

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To  
RICHARD LEWIS MOORE





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## PREFACE

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*A* distinguished British sportsman once said, "Two thirds of my life I give to the city. The other third belongs to me." I agree with this gentleman.

The material for this volume was collected in various parts of the world at odd moments, and I trust the reader may share some of the thrills and pleasures that were experienced by my companions and me on these little excursions into the wilds. The period covered is approximately twenty years, from 1917 to 1937.

The book was written for fun, and should be read, if read at all, for the same reason.

I am grateful to my friends, the Editors of *Field and Stream*, *Outdoor Life*, *Sports Afield*, and the *National Sportsman* for permission to republish the stories here.

R. L. S.

KANSAS CITY, MO.



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## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

*"Come and play along the jetties  
Where the tides come roaring in,  
And you'll never need a preacher,  
For you'll never want to sin.*

*With a porpoise for a playmate,  
You will never learn to swear,  
And you'd rather be an angler  
Than a bloomin' millionaire!"*

—*Lays of Aransas Pass.*

FROM Matagorda County southward, the mainland of Texas is separated from the gulf by a narrow chain of sandy islands. The strip lying east of Port Lovaca is a peninsula rather than an isolated body of land, but south of it, St. Joseph stands out, barren and alone, and Mustang and Padre appear to scorn all earthly connection with the mother continent.

The deep, narrow channel which separates St. Joseph from Mustang is called "Aransas Pass," and the Mustang-Padre hiatus, "Corpus Christi Pass." It is in and near these channels that the lordly tarpon, king of all game fishes, spends much of his time during the seven warmer months of the year.

In March and April, he may be found in more tropical zones, as Panama, Tampico, and even Port Isabel; but, as the northern waters lose their chill, and become more habitable, the silvery giants sweep in to pay their annual visit to the hospitable shores of the Lone Star State.

It was my friend, the eminent consulting bridge engineer, and widely known sportsman, Dr. J. A. L. Wad-

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

dell, who first told me of the wonderful fishing to be had at Aransas Pass.

The village of Port Aransas, located on Mustang Island, near the western end of the jetties, was at one time a prosperous little city, but the terrible storm and flood of 1919 nearly wiped it out of existence. Had it not been for the intrepid spirit of Captain Ed Cotter and other leading citizens, the famous fishing resort would be but a memory. Fortunately, these men refused to be driven away, and now, foot by foot, and yard by yard, they are slowly rebuilding their town.

The "jetties," which are composed of granite and gray sandstone, lie about 250 yards apart, and extend out into the sea for a distance of nearly two miles. They were originally laid in twenty feet of water, and their broad bases consist of irregularly shaped boulders, and loose stone. The "cap" rocks, particularly those on the North jetty, are rectangular in shape, and some are of enormous size, as large, or larger than the room of a small house. The engineers who had charge of the work certainly are entitled to praise; the huge masses are as accurately arranged as if they had been laid on solid ground instead of on a shifting bed of loose rock, in a deep sea channel.

While most of the fishing for tarpon is done from small rowboats, along the outer sides of the jetties, the tops of the barriers themselves are favorite territory for anglers in search of mackerel, sheepshead, and similar pan fish. These disciples use bamboo poles, from 18 to 20 feet long, with or without a reel to take up the slack line, and, when procurable, shrimp for bait.

A five-pound mackerel is a sporting proposition on the distal end of such an outfit, and a big jack fish or a shark

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is even more stimulating. Not infrequently, a hungry tarpon snaps at the tidbit, to the wrath and dismay of the mackerel seeker, and the unholy mirth of his associates.

For many years I have spent my brief winter vacations on the Florida Coast, principally because of the assurance of good fishing of some sort, at Long Key, Miami, or Useppa Island, the whole year round, but last Spring I decided to give Texas a trial. In consequence, three of us, Mr. Townley Culbertson, of the Commerce Trust Company, Dr. William H. Schutz, and I started for Aransas Pass, early in April. We should have known that it was too early for the big fish to be in, but all three of us were sadly in need of a rest, so off we went.

Mr. James Ellis, the manager of the little hotel which now takes the place of the famous old "Tarpon Inn," met us at the station, and soon we were chugging along in his motorboat, bound for Port Aransas, six miles out across the bay.

Mr. Ellis, who is as honest as he is homely, did not appear to be very enthusiastic over our prospects for a record catch. But he was hospitality personified, and we at once knew that we were due for a pleasant vacation, tarpon or no tarpon.

The sea was very rough, and when we reached the hotel, and climbed up into the "crow's nest", on the roof, we could see the big white caps, far out beyond the entrance to the Pass.

So we spent the afternoon unsuccessfully fishing for sharks off the Government pier. The next day, the little wavelets were still about four feet high, but we persuaded our guides, Mr. Ellis, Godfrey Roberts, the postmaster, and Ray Scott, a semi-retired marine engineer, to take us out anyway. Finally, they grudgingly consented. By



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the time we reached No. 2 Light, at the end of the North jetty, I appreciated the cause of their reluctance. Several of the earlier years of my life were spent on the ocean, and none of the Seven Seas is a total stranger to me, but never before have I encountered such a healthy and overgrown ground swell. The boat would be lifted high into the air, then higher, and higher, until we could see far over into Neuces County, then down, down, down, with a swift, breathless surge that reminded one of a temporary sojourn on the hurricane deck of a sun-fishing broncho! After the fifth descent, I broke into a gentle but cold perspiration, and soon afterward I got rid of my breakfast and that helped some. Townley beat me to it by several minutes, but Bill Schutz, that wild, case-hardened fisherman, trained on the stormy waves of Lake Miltona, never turned a hair. He sat in the back end of his little boat as stolid (and just about as beautiful) as Buddha, and chewed the end of an everlasting cigar, and fished, and fished, and fished.

I have always loved Bill, a better man and a nobler artist with the rod and reel never lived, but just at that minute I thirsted for his blood. Fortunately for him, I was unarmed and too sick to shoot, even if I had had a gun with me.

Townley returned to the hotel, about eleven o'clock, but Dr. Schutz and I fished until noon.

I ate no luncheon, but Mr. Culbertson, who is young and unsophisticated, had managed to get in an hour or two of sleep, and afterward felt as right as a rabbit, ate enough for both of us.

About two, we all came out for a second round. This time, only one of us got sick. It wasn't I, and, unfortunately, it wasn't Billy Schutz.

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

We saw a few tarpon, lazily rolling around, but they were not in sociable mood, and paid little attention to us. When we would row up to one, and offer him something to eat, he would simply wiggle his propellers, and that was the last we saw of him.

We caught three large jack fish and one shark. A big hammerhead cleaned my rig before I had a chance to even set the brakes.

Taking everything into consideration, the day was almost a blank.

The next morning, we arose, bright and early, and took a look at the sea. The wind had increased during the night, and the waves, even in the protected channel, were mountainous.

We went over and sat down on the edge of the dock and watched a school of cunning and merry young porpoises play leap frog for awhile, and then we decided to try for small fish, in the inland bays, for the day.

So we took a couple of the launches, and ran up to Lindy Ann Pass, and fished there, and along Murray Reef. Unfortunately, even the red fish weren't biting, although Dr. Schutz did manage to catch one, or rather, helped his guide to catch one, a six pounder. Coming back, we tried for them again, near the oil dock, and Mr. Culbertson succeeded in hooking a sting ray, with a tail about seven feet long.

Then my turn came, and I captured a small, blue catfish, with pink eyebrows. All in all, the day's bag was a mixed one.

Thursday, we tried the jetties again, and Townley and I both got sicker than ever. Finally, while near No. 3 Beacon, he got a tremendous pull. Almost unnerved, he

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shouted across the waves to me, "Hey, Doc, how much of the string shall I let him swallow?" "Hook him, hook him!", we all yelled, in unison. So Townley hooked him, and when he had at last dragged his recalcitrant prey to the surface, we found it was a five-foot shark, a wicked looking customer.

I shot it for him, and his guide spent two hours searching for the hook, which was finally located, badly rusted, four and a half feet back of the gills. Had Townley deferred a little longer, I feel quite sure that the hydrochloric acid in the shark's stomach would have completely ruined that hook.

The next day the sea was still running high, and we left for home.

Three months later, almost to a day, my son Dick and I boarded an M. K. and T. train, bound for Aransas Pass. We had decided to put in the first week of our Summer vacation in the Gulf instead of on the Northern lakes.

Forty hours afterward, we reached Mustang Island, and the next morning at eight, with Mr. Ellis and his friend, Rupert Brundrett, as oarsman, we were trolling along the seaward side of the North jetty. We had secured some fine mullet for bait, only an hour before, and we had every reason to believe that at least a few of the silver kings of Aransas Pass were due for a rude surprise that day. The water was like a mirror.

Passing through a small break in the jetty, at No. 2 Beacon, we slowly paraded, back and forth, along the jump-off, just where we thought our agile finny brethren might be seeking their breakfasts.

Dick has always been a lucky angler; at the mature age of three he once came near to catching all of the

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

salmon trout in the Yellowstone River, and fortune did not play him false, at least insofar as strikes were concerned, on his first day at Aransas. Unfortunately, I had started him out with an eighteen thread line, excellent for surf work, and satisfactory for an experienced tarpon fisherman, but not sufficiently strong for a wildly enthusiastic young sportsman, who, for the first time finds himself hooked up to six feet of piscatorial dynamite. To make matters worse, the brakes on his big vom Hofe reel were too tightly set, and every time he clamped his thumb down, something was bound to give way.

His baited hook, trailing along fifty or sixty feet back of the boat, had not been in the water thirty minutes before he felt a violent tug on the line, and, remembering his old days with the groupers and barracuda at Captive Pass, and among the Florida keys, he set the steel.

In tarpon parlance, a "pull" means a bite, but a "strike" is not a "strike" until you have "hung" your victim, and he breaks water.

I shall never forget the expression on that boy's face as the five and a half feet of glittering silver shot up into the air, clearing the surface by a couple of yards, to fall back with a resounding "thwack!" that could be heard for a quarter of a mile! A second wild jump, and as he came down, the line snapped! Then I was glad that the little boy's mother was not within earshot, for what the little boy said about that fish, and that line, and that leader, was simply shocking.

But Mr. Ellis bent on another rig, and soon everything was again running smoothly.

About ten-thirty, I hooked my first one, a slender, lop-jawed, goggle-eyed, temperamental old demon, six

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feet and three inches long, and full of ginger. He jumped only twice, but his long runs, and his sudden and peculiar changes of mind kept me guessing for almost an hour. I was using a pet, light, split bamboo rod, which bent like a buggy whip every time I tried to pump him, and almost from the start it was a hard battle to hold him in close to the jetty where we were comparatively safe from sharks. Finally, I had him exhausted, the first tarpon that I had ever caught from a rowboat, and as my guide slid him in under the seats, I could not help but think, "Great guns, and that huge beast was landed on a bamboo rod not much bigger than a slate pencil!" But pride goeth before a fall; that very afternoon I broke the rod on a peppy little four-footer!

As we rowed slowly back toward the east end of the jetty, I saw that Dick had hooked a leviathan of some sort that was giving him all he wanted in the way of sport. He afterward told me that the fish had already leaped three times, and as we drew up near the boat, I got a good side view of the monster. It must have been at least a seven-footer (which means much), and one of the widest tarpon, from above downward, that I have ever seen.

Suddenly the fish made a wild rush, possibly shark scared, although we never saw the shark, and, as the full tension came on the line, it again parted, and the captive was free.

I think that I was the most sorely disappointed one in the group, for I realized what a wonderful catch it would have been, but fortunately, Dick was too nearly winded to do or say anything worse than to splutter a little bit.

That night we checked up his outfit, and Mr. Ellis discovered and righted the trouble. Captain Cotter was

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kind enough to let me have some heavy line, and after that Dick fared better.

On Wednesday, the second day, I had eight strikes, and caught five fish, and, in consequence, began to swell out my chest, and consider myself invincible, but on Thursday I had only two strikes, and landed one, and on Friday, Saturday and Monday, three whole days, of ten hours each, I didn't get a single strike! That's tarpon luck!

On Wednesday Dick hooked and landed a beauty five feet and eleven inches long, which he kept to have "stuffed", as he expressed it, and, an hour later, he caught its twin. This one fought hard, and for an hour and forty-five minutes it was nip and tuck to see who would win. One moment of inattention, a few inches of slack line, and as a rule it is good-bye fish.

On our third trip past the scene of the conflict, I saw that Dick was again trolling, and I called and asked him about his newly found athletic friend. "Oh, I licked him and then turned him loose! Gee, but he looked grateful!" Had the youngster captured a six-hundred-pound broadbill, I could not have felt prouder of him. When a fourteen-year-old schoolboy is thoughtful enough to release a game fish of that size in order that it may be caught again some other day, there's hope for the future.

Of the eleven fish landed we kept only three; two for mounting, and one that was badly injured.

Fortunately, the tarpon is not an edible fish, and as the majority of those that are caught are promptly released, it is probable that we shall be able to enjoy the sport for many years to come.

With 6-9 tackle (a six-ounce tip, and a nine-thread,

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eighteen-pound test line), and a properly adjusted Edward vom Hofe reel, I know of no greater pleasure to be had for an equal expenditure of time and money than can be got by a brief Summer visit to the tarpon grounds of Aransas Pass.

## BIMINI SWORDFISH

*With a lanky Swede for skipper and a captain for a cook,  
And a big, fat doctor snorin' in the cabin down below,  
We'll chart our course for Bimini, and reach that port,  
by Jiminy,  
In spite of forty thunder showers and all the winds that  
blow.*

I HAVE a friend. His name is Dr. John Alexander Low Waddell. He is not a physician, or a tooth carpenter, or a veterinarian. He is a bridge engineer, probably the most famous in the whole world. In addition to a string of degrees as long as a tarpon line, he is an honorary member of forty-two learned societies, and has been decorated by half a dozen foreign governments. And in my humble opinion, his ability and character are only slightly appreciated by the world at large. At 80 he is still the finest, peppiest, and sportiest man, as well as the most skillful, indefatigable, and efficient angler that I have ever known. He loves to fish, better than anything else on this earth, and when he fishes he likes to bring home the bacon. Next to the distinguished editor of Outdoor Life, the Honorable Harry McGuire, he is the foremost exponent of heavy tackle in America today. None of his catch ever gets away, and none of it ever is wasted.

I have known him to feed whole islands of colored folk, week after week, with the harvest of his single rod and reel. When the decidedly brunette population of the Bahamas see him approaching they know that all will be well for many days (he is the sort of guy who sticks until the very last minute) and they invariably throw a



## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

celebration in his honor. "Bwana Waddell has arrived," and the word passes down the line like the mysterious throbbing of drums on a Tanganyika mountain side. All is well. Everybody stops work. Why labor when great armfuls of fish will be given away every evening at the Alice Town municipal dock? How he does it is beyond my feeble understanding. It must be black magic. One year, his boat, with his pet skipper, Larry Munro, of Miami, in command, brought in 5,000 pounds of edible fish in one week at Cat Key. And not one ounce was wasted—although I have heard it whispered that a small, 350 pound shark, which the doughty Doctor and his friends had planned to transport "on the hoof," managed to slip its picket rope and escape.

So prodigious a reputation cannot pass unmarked, and last year, at a Miami Angler's Club dinner, a limber-tongued laureate immortalized the great fisherman in verse:

*"Here's to that old expert, Waddell,  
An angler reputedly swell,  
When fishing for fun, he scores by the ton,  
And as for light tackle, Oh Hell!*

*With a telegraph pole for a rod,  
And a clothesline that looks a bit odd,  
And with harness on back, which gives them no slack,  
He yanks out the big ones, by God!"*

Dr. Waddell is as good a judge of fishing territory as he is of bridges, and when he suggests a likely spot, or invites me to go fishing, I go.

I am the proud literary parent of a certain medical text book, and every once in a while I am compelled to bring the volume up to date, and formulate a new edition.

## BIMINI SWORDFISH

Originally the treatise contained only 1,000 pages, but during the past two decades it has grown into a buxom little volume of nearly 1,400. Revising an encyclopedia of this sort is quite a chore, and when the work is completed I always look about for recreation, for I pine for relaxation.

Formerly, with money growing on trees, as it were, I was ambitious, and in those days Africa, India, Indo China and the Arctic did not call in vain. But with a depleted pocketbook and a tropical liver, lesser joys must suffice, and for once in my life I did not know what to do. But the birth of the ninth edition must be celebrated in some way and I was on the point of starting for Mexico when I received a letter from Doctor Waddell. He had visited the Bahamas in April, 1933. "How would you like to go to Bimini after marlin?" he asked. How would I? Talk about an angel whispering in your ear!

March was a bit early for the Palm Beach and Miami boatmen, for they must reap their harvest while it is ripe. Captain Munro was under charter, but through the kindness of another angler friend, Harry Tidd of Hutchinson, Kansas, I got in touch with Captain Frank Soderberg, of West Palm Beach, an old and seasoned sailor, and a famous sailfish guide. Soderberg wished to defer the expedition for a week or two, but I was all set and ready to go and argued him down (at a cost of \$10.30 in telegraph tolls).

Dr. Waddell's offices are in New York, but he promised to meet me in Florida on March 12, and he was on the platform when I stepped off the train.

Like all true followers of Piscatorius, he had brought with him everything but his grandmother's cat. I never saw such a bunch of equipment in my life. And when

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

mine was added to the pile—for I am a man of foresight, and I delight in collecting tackle—we had to hire a truck to get it down to the dock. Soderberg was glad to see us, but he looked askance at our luggage. "You won't need all of that stuff," he expostulated, as he counted the big reels, and checked over the bundles of heavy rods. "Why, I have plenty of tackle right here on the boat." But he was not talking to an amateur, fresh from the grease brush country. "If we go, it goes" Waddell said, and our lanky Swede skipper despairingly shrugged his shoulders. So it went.

The next day was spent in victualling the ship, and taking on oil and gas.

As helper, Soderberg had secured Frank Fasy, who for years had captained fishing craft in Florida, and at Montauk Point. He was a good seaman and a charming and efficient shipmate. Frank Fasy could do anything. A bit convivial at times, but a wonder while on duty.

The Sailfish, Captain Soderberg's boat, is a 36-footer, with a powerful and economical engine, new, and very seaworthy. She can comfortably sleep six, is well ventilated, and is equipped with a good galley, and satisfactory toilet facilities. The four of us found her roomy and home-like.

The only disturbing element was the weather. March winds are never tractable, and in 1934 old Boreas was on the rampage. In reality, we were starting across the Gulf Stream just about one month too early. We left Palm Beach at daybreak on the 14th, and ran down to Fort Lauderdale on the inside. The scenery is beautiful, and we appreciated every mile of it.

At Lauderdale Captain Soderberg made for the open

## BIMINI SWORDFISH

sea. While a bit rough, the water was clear, and we enjoyed the run to Miami. Here we filled our gas tanks and took on some extra oil. But the weather reports were disconcerting, and we decided to fish in home waters for one day before bucking the Stream. It is probably fortunate that we did, for one small boat that started across that day got into trouble. In the evening, Captain Munro, having learned that we were in town, came over for a visit. After listening to him and Dr. Waddell for a couple of hours I went to bed, and dreamed of seventeen-foot marlin and broadbills all night.

At six the next morning we started for Bimini. The weather man had predicted a cloudless sky, and recommended sunshades. As usual, the weather man was wrong, and during the next twelve hours, we encountered at least a score of thunder showers. The wind veered, and while the rain appeared to flatten the waves a bit, a series of long and heavy swells made me feel very unhappy. I thought of the old nursery rhyme, "Up came the marmalade, and up came the jam, Up came the pickles and up came the ham," and promptly acted on the suggestion. But it was too late to turn back. A poor seaman at best, and a miserable one at worst, I just had to let them come. Doctor Waddell, veteran of a hundred battles with the deep, decided that the heaving deck was no place for a young man like him, and retired to his bunk.

Soderberg and Fasy took turns at the wheel and I confined my attention to other and more serious, but equally pressing matters. If I had to die, I preferred to do it in the open air, so I gracefully festooned myself around a stanchion, and remained there for twelve long and weary hours. The thought of those big fish that the Doctor

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

and Larry had caught on the previous evening was all that sustained me.

As the crow flies, Bimini is fifty-two miles due east of Miami. As the "Sailfish" jiggled, with the wind and waves tossing us about, it was very nearly a hundred. It seemed to me that we would never arrive. We were blown far off our course, and if we had failed to see St. Isaac's light, about 5 P. M., I guess we'd be going yet. It should have been far north of us; strange to say, it had apparently traveled some distance south! We gave it the benefit of the doubt, however, (personally, I have learned to have considerable confidence in lighthouses) and finally, shortly after six, we reached the outer end of Bimini inlet. Our pilot was familiar with its peculiarities and the arboreal landmarks, and I was certainly relieved and happy when we pulled alongside the dock. A few minutes later another Miami visitor, that had been fishing out in the Gulf Stream all day, passed our berth, and I saw a nine-foot marlin on the after deck. This stimulating glimpse proved wonderfully helpful, and a few minutes later I was playing the man at the well-spread supper table, and enjoying every bite.

Bimini consists of two islands, commonly referred to as North Bimini and South Bimini. It is British-owned and British-governed, which always means well-governed. The population is mainly colored, and the commercial products are those of the sea.

For many years Bimini has been known as the rum center of the Western Hemisphere, but this was a matter of chance and not of choice. Apparently there are still a few bootleggers about, for the long, low, fast cruisers that flit in and out of the harbor nearly every

## BIMINI SWORDFISH

night are suggestive, and the large liquor store houses still appear quite busy and prosperous.

Alice Town and Bailey Town, on North Bimini, can boast a total of three or four hundred citizens, ninety-five per cent of whom are brunettes.

The best-known man on the Island is Bruce Bethel, commonly referred to as the King of Bimini. A world war veteran with a distinguished record, he has resided in the Bahamas nearly all of his life. He lost his right arm, and practically all of his regimental comrades, in France. In July, 1933, while aboard an old concrete hulk near South Bimini, he attempted to save the life of a young companion who had been seized with cramps,

Bethel was swept into the Gulf Stream, and out to sea, with only a narrow bit of scantling, two feet long, to aid him in keeping afloat. For eighteen hours the brave one-armed swimmer battled the current, and the white-capped waves. At last he was discovered by two sponge fishermen, who at first mistook him for a shark. After dragging him aboard their little sail boat they harangued long and earnestly regarding the amount they should receive for saving his life! Finally they carried him to Alice Town, but several times a year they call on him and demand more "gratitude money."

King Bethel owns the only hotel on the Island. He lost nearly all of his fortune in the liquor business, and I sincerely trust that he makes a go of it as inn-keeper. We found him a gracious and charming man, and I recommend him to my friends.

Shortly after we tied up at the wharf, another cruiser arrived, the "Vairene", Captain McNeal. I heard my name called, and in the open cabin I saw two Texas

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friends, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Colvin, of Houston. Needless to say, Dr. Waddell and I were overjoyed.

Mrs. Colvin is an earnest and industrious angler. She caught several small tarpon in the Bay, but she really specialized on mangrove snappers. At this sort of fishing she is expert and I hesitate to say how many scores of these beautiful little fellows she hooked while we were neighbors in Bahaman waters.

A few days later two of Dr. Waddell's colleagues and friends came, R. G. Packard, a construction engineer, and inventor, as well as a widely known African and Alaskan big game hunter, and his associate, Eddie H. Dion, of New York. They had the "Viking", Captain E. E. Saar, and First Officer Robert Caldwell, out of Fort Lauderdale. We were indebted to these gentlemen for one very pleasant and profitable day in the Gulf Stream.

Incidentally, Mr. Dion caught one of the biggest sailfish that I have ever seen. It looked as long as a fence rail. In reality, it was a bit over eight feet.

The water at Bimini is something to dream about. Off the shoals it is a deep, clear blue, and on a quiet day one can see far beneath the surface. It is in the shallower bays and inlets, however, that it is most beautiful. The rocks, sponges, and conchs stand out as clearly as if they were under glass, and huge goggle-fish fairly swarm everywhere.

Bimini Bay presents many square miles of the best bonefish territory in the whole world. My friend, Charles K. Bispham, of Philadelphia and Miami, spends months on the Island every year. He is a bonefish addict, and a skilled marlin fisherman, as well. With his native guide, Bonefish Sam, he has explored every nook and

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cranny of the Bahamas. From choice, and as a sporting proposition, he uses a sixteen-foot canvas skiff, with outboard motor. Early in March, he hooked, and subdued, a nine-foot marlin out of this tender little craft, a feat which has never been duplicated. Mr. Bispham is as unassuming as he is skilled and capable, and undoubtedly is one of the most experienced of all salt-water anglers.

Marlin, like their smaller cousins, the sailfish, are comparatively scarce and are found only in certain parts of the world during certain seasons of the year. In the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, they strike only in January and February; in the Bahamas, and, rarely, directly off the Florida coast, they may be caught in March, April and May; while in the Gulf of California, near Guaymas, Sonora, it is virtually useless to fish for them except during June and July. The vicinity of Catalina Island provides a fourth place and season.

While these big fish are found only in water of from 200 to 500 feet, they are surface feeders, and are particularly fond of flying fish, ballyhoo, mullet and needle-fish. When a school of small fry is discovered by a hungry marlin, the big swordsman shoots up to the surface almost like a flash. The long, rough, pointed bill is a terrible weapon, and a few seconds of desperate flailing is sufficient to maim or kill scores of unfortunate victims. The marlin generally does not try to feed until the school of little fish is widely scattered. Then he ceases to wield the fearful proboscis with which nature has provided him, and leisurely gobbles up his dead and wounded prey, one at a time. The food demands of an eight-foot swordfish are tremendous, and apparently the big fellows are hungry most of the time.



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They are caught by trolling surface baits behind motor boats. The lure, which consists of the carefully arranged corpse of a flying fish or mullet, garnished with one or two skillfully concealed hooks, is attached to a long steel piano wire leader, which, in turn, is swiveled to the end of a heavy linen line, 1,000 or 1,500 feet long. Huge reels, equipped with adjustable mechanical drags, are needed, and also heavy rods made of hickory or of split bamboo. At times it is necessary for the angler to resort to the use of shoulder "harness", leather braces which pass over the shoulders and are fastened to a broad hook, which fits over an upper bar on the reel.

A good "teaser" should play just beneath the surface, and as the front tip of the plug is scooped out to form an oval, the brilliantly painted bit of cedar darts about like an enormous demented water-bug.

I have long used a red and white decoy of this sort which I have named "Barbara", in honor of an auburn-haired young friend of the family. Barbara has proved so industrious and reliable that I immortalized her in verse in one of my earlier stories. Two of the stanzas read:

*"She worked like a slavey, with never a moan,  
And spent the cold nights on the deck, all alone.  
Whether the fishes were biting or not,  
Barbara earned all the rest she got."*

Captain Soderberg just had invested in a large and brightly-decorated decoy plug, which looked like a barber pole that had recently been stung by bumble bees. Despite its unusual and somewhat fantastic color and configuration, the enormous "teaser" appeared to possess personality of a sort. On some days it behaved quite

## BIMINI SWORDFISH

well, but on others it proved erratic and undependable. We christened the decoy "Huey."

Not infrequently a big and hungry fish becomes bold enough to grasp and swallow one of these painted cedar effigies and that is just what happened to Huey. On the next to the last day his behavior had been particularly atrocious. He would not remain beneath the water and he refused to stay on top. And the first thing he knew, and almost before the crew realized it, a big shark, many cubits long, had got him! An agonized swishing of the leading string, a sort of S. O. S. from the depths, and Huey disappeared forever. The anglers felt sorry for him, but sorrier for the fish. Eighteen inches of cedar barber pole is at best indigestible, and when backed by a personality and disposition like Huey's, the shark was bound to be the ultimate loser. One of the party penned the following touching tribute, in memoriam:

*Huey was a saucy lad,  
Who dearly loved to frolic.  
The stunts that plug would sometimes pull,  
Would give a man the colic.*

*He was his mama's foolish child,  
Always the family dunce,  
Who never did a wise thing twice,  
And hardly ever once.*

*He'd try to sneak ashore at night,  
Then loaf throughout the day,  
Or prance upon the shining waves,  
And swirl the salty spray.*

*He vexed the Swedish boatman,  
(The captain could have shot him),  
And all of us were happy  
When the fourteen-footer got him.*

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For a long time swordfish were hooked only by accident and no one cared to waste time on a sport which was almost as undependable as college poker. Finally, some angler who possessed imagination as well as ambition, decided to try to solve the problem. He probably shut himself in a dark and quiet room, absorbed three or four drinks of Bimini tonic, took stock of himself and looked into his own soul. He concluded that the thing to do was not to try to hook the fish immediately when it struck, but endeavor to make the bait respond as a live and free fish, when hit by a swordfish, might. The plan worked, and since then, occasionally somebody actually snags one of the long-nosed brutes.

Having selected suitable territory, this is just what we did. With fresh bait, we spent hours and days combing and currying the deep blue waters of the adjacent Gulf Stream. With two baits trailing behind the boat, we patiently worked back and forth, in and out, for scores and hundreds of miles. Often the weather was bad and the water so rough that we were compelled to fish the shoals, along the protected reefs, for barracuda, grouper, dolphin and wahoo. For two whole days the wind was like that of a young hurricane, and we put in the entire time on beautiful Bimini Bay, angling for ghost-like bonefish, probably the most agile and powerful of all the smaller members of the finny tribe.

The first day spent in the pursuit of marlin was a blank, although one big fish did come up and take a vicious poke at the decoy. After that, however, we were rewarded with from two to eight strikes every day. Sometimes we would see the swordsman as he rushed the bait or the teaser, but more often not. Then would come a long, rasp-like pull as the bait was struck, the fortunate

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angler would yell "Strike!" and involuntarily his right thumb would flip back the drag clutch, rendering the reel "free spool", the man at the wheel would throttle down the engine to half speed, and all three onlookers would yell, "Feed it to him! Feed it to him!"

If the strike was a marlin strike, the supposedly freshly-killed victim would drop helplessly back, and the hungry marlin would grab it in his hard, bony jaws, and leisurely swallow it, hooks and all. In order to obtain a natural sequence of events, the defunct needlefish or other bait must be made to act like a wounded or recently killed fish. So the lucky wielder of the rod madly casts off line, seemingly miles and miles of it, in reality probably one or two hundred feet. Then he thumbs his reel until the line is taut, and as the last foot of slack disappears he snaps on the drag and tries to set the hook with a smooth and speedy upward sweep of the rod.

If all has gone well, it is then that things begin to happen. One feels a vicious tug on the line, for the strength of a 200-pound fish is amazing, and then the water opens up, and the huge, long-nosed, glittering, blue demon leaps skyward, like a cross-eyed meteor in reverse.

Every man in the audience spouts advice, none of which is heeded, the boat shoots forward, to take up slack line, and the battle is on: If the fish is a big one, the angler settles back in his chair, snaps his harness hook to the big reel and prays to all the gods in the decalogue that nothing will break. Occasionally the fish is so tremendously heavy and powerful that it absolutely refuses to respond to halter at all, and even a seventy-two-pound line is only a pack thread. Foot after foot zips off the swiftly whirling spool, despite the fact that

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the maximum drag is on. The side plates become so hot that they fairly sizzle, and still the big boy travels! The spool gets smaller and smaller, and finally, with a sickening snap, the line parts, and the huge old leviathan is free, and on his way to parts unknown, with 500 yards of line dangling from his chin.

But generally the angler's supplications are rewarded, the line holds, and for two or three or four hours he is more or less firmly attached to a huge, leaping, twisting, buck-jumping demon of the deep, with muscles of tempered steel, and a brain that never for a moment ceases to function. When the wise old warrior discovers that walking on his tail, and vigorously shaking his head brings no relief, he is likely to "sound", and indulge in a fit of sulks, several hundred feet below the surface. Antics of this sort are hard on the nerves as well as on the patience of the neophyte, but the seasoned angler will get a thrill out of every new kink, for he knows that the smarter they are the harder they fall. So he bides his time and conserves his strength and never for a moment relaxes his vigilance or eases the tension on his line.

Of the fish that are hooked, about one in five finally are brought to gaff, and of these, unless the prize be exceptionally large, or badly injured, fully one-half are freed, with the hope that they may strike again some other day.

Kites, as well as single and double outriggers, are used. We had excellent luck with the former, although they entail a considerable amount of extra work, and the wind must be right in order to secure the best results.

Personally, I had rather do the trolling myself. Heavy tackle is to be recommended, for one never knows what

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one is going to hook. My outfit consisted of a heavy hickory rod—although I fought and landed one big fish, and also a huge shark, on Captain Soderberg's light rod—and 36-thread line, a No. 9/0 reel, and 1,200 feet of No. 24 linen line. Dr. Waddell used a bamboo rod and No. 24 thread.

Shoulder harness saves a lot of hard work, and seat sockets are far better than belt sockets. Twelve-foot, No. 10 leaders are used, with single or double (sailfish rig) hooks.

The sport is a stimulating and thrilling one, well worth the time and trouble that it costs.

## CHUMMING FOR BONES

**O**F all the smaller members of the finny tribe, if you can call a four-pounder small, none is so wary, timid, and agile as the bonefish. Shaped something like the carp, and sharing the brilliant, silvery loveliness of the shad, this beautiful and aristocratic athlete is found only in tropical waters. It haunts the flats, feeding principally at certain periods of the tide. By many experts it is considered the greatest of all game fishes. Discriminating anglers, who each year for decades, have spent weeks pursuing this shadowy ghost of the mangrove keys, insist that as a sporting proposition it has no equal. Certainly, pound for pound, it can put up a better fight than any fish that I have ever hooked. For speed and action it is unsurpassed.

In order to be a successful bonefisherman, you must be blessed with a certain sort of temperament. Defosse, of Suoi Kiet, has a prescription for tigers which he insists is infallible. The ingredients are patience, a bait, and a rifle. For bonefish, I would change this formula to patience, a bait, and more patience. Verily, to the uninitiated, fishing for bones is about the most worrisome business in the whole world. My first experience with this particular pearl of great price dates back some fifteen years. I was staying at Long Key, Florida. An acquaintance, who was vulgarly called a "bonefish nut," persuaded me to spend a day on the flats with him. For ten long, weary, monotonous, centurylike hours we sat in a small cockleshell of a boat, beneath a red-hot tropical sun, and hoped that something would bite. The only

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thrill we got was when a cockeyed, bow-legged crab stole our bait.

Disgusted, I swore that never again would I knowingly make such a consummate ass of myself. My friend simply shrugged his shoulders, and next day returned to his self-appointed task. He certainly was an addict of the first water. During our ten days' stay he brought in but one measly little fish, and to me it appeared a bit under par, intellectually, although not much more so than my playmate of that bonefishing expedition.

Recently, while visiting the Bahamas, I was again tempted, and fell. No sooner had our boat docked than a tall, lanky Negro boy, whose name I afterward learned was Isiah, ran alongside in a graceful little dory. "Does you want to go chummin' for bones, Mistah?" he politely queried. "Not while the 'marlin are biting and we can get outside," I replied. I found that both Isiah and his brother Cephias were charter members of the local Baptist church, and noted bonefish guides. It was Isiah's broad smile and white teeth, however, rather than any fancied reputation, that won my heart. I promised him that on the first wharf-bound day I would accompany him.

In passing I may say that Bimini Bay and its environs supply several hundred square miles of the best bonefish territory in the world. Three days later a norther blew in, and when our skipper decided that it was too windy to troll in the Gulf Stream I asked the cook to put up a lunch for me while I unearthed Isiah.

North Bimini is sausage-shaped, with Alice Town near the southern extremity and Bailey Town to the North. I had expected to find Isiah in Alice Town, but apparently



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the farther I walked the farther away he lived. I was in slippers, and there was much loose sand and many small stones. Past the hotel and the radio station and the smithy I shuffled; past the little boxlike stores with their knots of polite but leisurely colored customers, the rum fleet, and the liquor storehouses, and still no Isiah. One coal-black adolescent tailed me for a few blocks, striving to carry on a somewhat limpy, unilateral conversation, but finally abruptly deserted me when I laughingly refused to give him my ancient Khaki shooting coat.

An old man and a little boy, both disreputably attired, volunteered to show me where Isiah lived, but I declined the offer and trudged on. At last I concluded that Isiah was as unreliable as his beloved bonefish, and started to retrace my steps. "Mistah, is you still lookin' for Isiah?" piped a small voice. I turned to find a ragged youngster at my elbow. "I is," was my reply in the vernacular. The little chap darted through the palms and tropical undergrowth, and soon I heard him shout "Heah is Isiah, please, Mistah!" When he saw the small silver coin with which I rewarded him his smile was in itself a blessing for a wandering old fisherman like me. It was then well past eight o'clock. We experienced considerable difficulty in arousing my native boatman, but finally he appeared in a ragged suit of pajamas. I promised to give him his breakfast, and rushed back to the boat to rig up my tackle. Another hour passed and I thought that Isiah had changed his mind, but finally he came. His broad-beamed ten-foot boat, which had been built by his father thirty-four years before, was in fairly good condition, and his appetite in even better. He quickly stowed away all of our loose cold victuals. Aside from a stout pine oar, a patched

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sail, and a recently repaired mast, the only furniture he had was a sponge hook and an old hatchet.

When I tried to reprimand him for being late he said, "Nevah mind, Mistah, nevah hurry when you are goin' bonefishin.' It just ain't done." And Isiah was right. I took a couple of rods, with reels filled with 9-thread linen line, a few hooks, and half a dozen sinkers. The boat appeared perfectly seaworthy, and as the water was shallow anyhow, I was not worried. Isiah poled toward the first key, a quarter of a mile away. "How about bait?" I asked. "Mistah, the Lawd will provide," was the oracular reply.

Hitherto, I had always rested under the impression that bonefish lived on hermit crabs. The water became shallower and shallower. Isiah was an expert with the push pole, however, and we made pretty good progress. I heard an exclamation, "Theah you is!" and the next instant my brunette boatman had grabbed the sponge hook and made a pass at something in the water. For a fleeting second I thought he was trying to gaff a bonefish, but when he lifted the hook I saw he had picked up a big, dripping conch shell. This he dropped on the bottom of the boat. Five minutes later he captured another, and then another, and another. Soon quiet water was reached. It was about a foot and a half deep. The bottom was of yellowish, soft, claylike mud, with considerable broad-leafed marine grass.

We anchored here for a time, protected from wind by the mangrove trees on the key. Isiah picked up a big conch, and despite the frantic gesticulations of the enclosed mollusk, whose single claw appeared frantically to wigwag a stop signal, he took his old battle-scarred

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hatchet and hacked loose the spiral tip of the shell. Gently he separated the tip from the main shell, and then Mr. Conch was neatly unscrewed from his snug little home. I have never seen the trick done with greater neatness and dispatch. The useless shell was returned to the water, the hood clipped off, and the loose entrails were squashed in the guide's hand and cast far to the windward, where we were going to place our baits. This is what Isiah meant by chumming. Anyone who has ever seen a shark trail a cut bait or a wounded fish by odor alone knows how marvelous a sense of smell some fish possess. In my opinion a bonefish has a far keener nose than a shark.

The main portion or body of the conch was thoroughly bruised and crushed with the head of the hatchet in order to make it tender and juicy. The baits are quite large, at least as big as the tip of one's thumb. Isiah preferred wire leaders, but I afterward learned that one can do very well with no leader at all. The sinker is attached to the line about two feet above the hook, and the bait cast as far from the boat as possible. Having thrown out the baited hooks, all one has to do is wait. Bonefishing certainly is the "waitingest" game in the world.

Isiah and I had quite a boat ride that day. Nine hours of it. Finally I decided to haul down the flag. About 5:30 I told Isiah that we would collect a few conches for culinary purposes and call it a day. Which we did. Conches are supposed to be a very powerful and stimulating food, fine for the nerve centers and good for whatever ails you. I know the ones that we brought home did us a world of good.

Almost a week passed before I had an opportunity to cross swords again with the shining knights of the keys.

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Then, as a result of engine trouble, we were laid up for a day. This time I selected a white guide, Edmund Newbolt, a native of Nassau and a man with a great reputation. He certainly deserved it. He reminded me of one of my old guides at Reelfoot Lake, Tenn., and he certainly knew his stuff. In eight hours he showed me more bonefish than I had thought existed in the whole world. And we actually caught some of them. Instead of crushing the chum in his hands, he had brought along a small meat grinder. I'll bet those bonefish hadn't had such a feed since Hector was a pup.

Having cast our hooks into the baited area, we slacked our lines a foot or two and held the slack with the left thumb and forefinger. When a fish took the baited hook, we fed it to him until the line was taut, then struck. Sometimes the results were astonishing.

I have never seen quicker action. One second you feel the nibble, the line runs out, and you set the hook; the next second your fish is almost over the horizon and still going strong. My first one came near getting away with my entire outfit. Two or three of these mad, desperate rushes, then five minutes of persuasion, and, if nothing breaks, you may be able to boat your prize. Take it from me, chumming for bones is a sport that is chock-full of surprises and thrills.

## GRINDSTONE MUSKIES

*I have fished till my fingers are covered with corns,  
From The Lake of The Woods to St. Paul;  
From morning till night, on days gloomy and bright,  
But I can't catch a musky at all.*

*Oh, carry me back to that Chippewa town,  
Where the Grindstone and Court Oreilel meet;  
With guides dark and husky, and lakes full of musky,  
And a limit of seventeen feet!*

—*Wisconsin Spring Song.*

FOR years I have pursued muskies all over the state of Minnesota. Bass, perch, pike, and pickerel I have caught in plenty, but muskellunge have proved evanescent and flirtatious. One summer, a medical friend, who lives up in the Deer River country, assured me that he knew just where they could be found, in schools, and herds, and droves, and advised me to bring along a Ford trailer in which to carry home the piscatorial harvest. Foolishly, I believed him, and one bright August morning, after rashly promising stuffed musky, musky cutlets, musky steaks, and musky a la mode to all of my friends and acquaintances at Piney Ridge, Richard Brophy, my son Dick, and I started out to gather in the sheaves. A hundred mile ride, and we reached the promised land. The twin lakes which adorned the territory did not look very good to me, for the beaches were neither stony nor sandy, but composed of just plain, gray volcanic mud, and the water resembled pea soup. But we did not hesitate. We dared not. Our word had been pledged, and it was up to us to bring home the bacon.

We chartered a couple of small boats, and the only

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available guide, a handsome, vivacious young Swede farmer, who was a capital oarsman, and who really earned the eight dollars a day that he blushingly charged us for acting as propeller and cicerone. Brophy and Dick dropped in behind with the Outboard motor, and all three of us began to hopefully trail nickel plated spoons about the size of tea plates.

Nine hours of this prayerful exercise, and not a nibble. It seems that we had struck the fishing grounds at an unfortunate season. This is habitual with me. The muskellunge were shedding their teeth, and firmly refused to bite anything harder than dough balls. On the other hand, they must be caught trolling. We were in a quandary. For who could troll with a dough ball, and succeed in holding it on the hook? It would have kept at least nine cook's assistants busy preparing dough balls enough to supply one industrious angler, for of course the bait must be fresh. And who would ever dare venture out on the lake with a safari like that?

But we stuck for one more day, and tried out every lure in our steamer trunk tackle box. Then we bade Deer River a tearful and permanent farewell, and bashfully wended our way homeward. For we knew the welcome that awaited us. And we were not disappointed. That medical brother of mine was a whiz on chills and fevers, but he was a rotten diagnostician when it came to muskies.

One day, during the following November, my old friend, Dr. Thor Jager, of Wichita, and I were sitting in a blind on the edge of a small lake in Southern Kansas, slowly freezing to death, while Charlie Smyth, on the opposite shore, was rapidly wearing out a perfectly good

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Model '97 Winchester pump gun, killing seven mallards a minute. The ducks ignored us, so we talked fish. Dr. Jager is also a devotee of the rod and reel, and generally spends his vacations on the Northern Lakes.

I explained to him my difficulty in trying to locate a dependable muskellunge nest, and he told me that he had had the same experience, but had finally discovered a place in Wisconsin, midway between Duluth and Minneapolis, which fairly teemed with them.

Jager is a conservative man, and as honest as any true fisherman ever can be. But I wanted to make certain. I had neither time nor inclination for another Deer River fiasco. So I asked Mrs. Jager. She corroborated Thor's story. That settled the matter, for she is a Smith College graduate, and forthwith I planned to spend a week or ten days with Sam Williams, on Grindstone Lake, near Hayward, the following Spring. But man proposes and God disposes, and it was the latter part of July before my handsome young son and I climbed out of the Pullman at Hayward. My heart was gripped with the fear that the fish might again be shedding their teeth, but Dick is a hopeful and optimistic boy, and I did not wish to agitate him, so I said nothing.

The two lakes, Grindstone and Court Oreille (or Courts Oreilles), are located about seven miles from Hayward, and are typical muskellunge strongholds. Only this fish and its pugnacious associate, the gray, or small mouthed bass are found here. The Chippewa Indian reservation is located nearby, and much dependence is placed upon those swarthy native sons as guides and oarsmen.

The Williams' cottages are grouped on a slightly point

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overlooking the lake. Sam proved a typical outdoorsman; tall, slender, athletic, and as full of energy as a Deisel engine. Mrs. Williams is a charming and capable hostess, and one might truthfully suggest for their household scutcheon the motto, "Sam Williams' Resort, Where Hospitality Is a Religion, and the Chickens Are Born Fried."

For guide, we drew a handsome young Chippewa brave, Antoine Schultz by name, who appeared to have a speaking acquaintance with every adult fish in the vicinity.

When we started out, at seven-thirty the next morning, Mr. Williams inquired, "Bass or musky?" and my blood pressure dropped a link, for I thought he was trying to break the sad news gently. Of course we both declared for the larger game, and, a few minutes later, our power boat was skirting the shoal water of the bathing beach.

Antoine, or Tony, as we promptly dubbed him, checked over our heavy rods and reels approvingly, but did not appear very enthusiastic regarding my fifteen pound test line. I feel that while one must use a stiff rod for trolling, particularly with heavy lures, it is only fair to give the fish the choice of lines. And few muskies care to be dragged aboard with a block and tackle, at the end of a two inch hawser. It shocks their aesthetic sensibilities.

Tony was optimistic, but not loquacious, and his replies to our numerous queries were mostly grunts. Dick was sitting humped up in the front end of the boat, figuring out a new table of logarithms, when I saw his line suddenly tighten. Tony's white teeth flashed in a smile as the boy automatically responded to the thrill,



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and set his hook home. A moment later, three feet of silver and gold, topped by a vicious looking head, and a set of teeth that would have made the fortune of old Doc Wornack, our beloved family dentist, shot into the air a hundred feet back of the boat.

"Some fish!" gasped Dick, as he gave him the spring of the rod, and cranked away for dear life.

"What you t'ink of heem?" asked Tony, as the captive made another long leap in an effort to regain his freedom. "Ah, we use fish like that to catch bait with, down on the Gulf," answered Young America. But Tony knows boys almost as well as he knows fish, and refused to be spoofed. The new acquisition weighed eighteen pounds, and was the largest caught during our entire stay. Muskellunge luck is like tarpon luck, the giants are rare, and the infants predominate. The recently enacted Wisconsin law is an unfortunate one, for it permits game fish of any size to be taken and retained. A ten pound minimum, and a one fish per day limit on muskellunge would be far better and more sportsmanlike.

We were able to spend only six days at Grindstone, but during that time we caught eleven muskies, eight of which weighed between ten and eighteen pounds apiece. The gray bass fishing is excellent. Frogs or minnows are used for bait. Inch for inch, I consider the small mouthed gray bass the gamiest fresh water fish there is.

The western part of the state is dotted with small, clear water lakes, and all contain game fish of some sort. One evening, we walked a mile across country to a small pond called "Island Lake," which is a veritable black bass hatchery. They do not run large, from a pound to a pound and a half, but the water fairly swarm with them.

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As Dick said, "If you should take all of the bass out of that lake, the water would drop a foot." Unfortunately, Island Lake harbors mosquitos as well as bass. I met several that were physically quite well developed, being about midway in size between a humming bird and a canary. They were not only hungry, but unafraid, and an encounter with them was not calculated to arouse either joy or enthusiasm in the breast of the victim.

But Grindstone itself boasts no such deterrents, and pilgrims to its shores invariably become enthusiastic habitues.

## ON THE TRAIL OF THE BARRACUDA

*Snappers when it's murky,  
Groupers when it's clear;  
But the sand-fleas and mos-  
quitoes bite  
The whole blamed year!  
From "Songs on Florida Keys."*

I HAVE often wondered how Izaak Walton spent his winters. So enthusiastic an angler could not have been content with simply keeping shop from October until May, even in those stirring days preceding the great Civil War, and I suspect that during the few hours when he was not busy at the counter or occupied in jotting down biographic notes on Donne, and Hooker, and Wotton and Sanderson, he was overhauling his fishing tackle, and dreaming of the early spring days, when he might again wander along the sides of the little English brooks, persuading various hungry and incautious members of the finny tribe that a "dry" life is far preferable to a moist one, replete with rheumatism and influenza.

Mr. Walton undoubtedly had his troubles, but Time has covered them with its misty mantle, and now only the joys remain perceptible to the naked eye. Had the author of the "Compleat Angler" been a contemporary of ours, he probably would have written considerably less, and worried quite a bit more, for in his mad rush to solve the problem of sustenance, he would undoubtedly have landed, nervous, exhausted and thirsty, in the clutches of that most successful of all fortune-tellers, the income tax collector. But if one can remain healthy, and energetic, and fairly sane, nothing is wholly impossible, and for

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those who are sadly in need of these three essentials, a winter fishing trip is almost indispensable. If you will not take my word for it, read Zane Grey's fish book. Conviction lurks on every page.

Accompanied by a brother sufferer, I sampled the prescription myself last winter, and the results were all that could be desired.

Neither of us had ever been in Florida before, but fortunately I had a friend residing there, an eminent young physician, Dr. H. C. Babcock, who had helped to put Miami on the world's medical map, and through him we were so fortunate as to secure an able and experienced guide, Tom Canadian by name, a hunter and fisherman who habitually spends his winters in the South and his summers in the Maine woods. Canadian chartered a small boat for us, a nineteen-ton, forty-six-foot gasoline cruiser, together with the services of a skipper and a cook, laid in an adequate supply of provisions, and had everything in readiness on the day of our arrival. All we had to do was to purchase a couple of hundred dollars' worth of heavy tackle, send farewell telegrams to our families, and climb aboard.

Have you ever been in Miami? It is a wonderful town, no longer little, and the inhabitants travel on high from November to April, entertaining visitors from all four corners of the earth, and build hotels and lay out plantations during the rest of the year, in order to house and feed the next season's overflow. Her Chamber of Commerce never sleeps, and a "Do You Know" list of her business advantages and trade activities would make many of her larger sisters feel just as St. Louis does every time she casts her eyes Kansas Cityward.

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Our "yacht" was moored at Elsar's dock, in the Midway Plaisance zone, and as we were to sail at five the next morning, we spent the night on board. Unfortunately, a prize fight, or rather a series of prize fights, had been staged for that evening in the pavilion adjoining the dock, and a large and vociferous crowd was in attendance. My friend, who for the sake of convenience we will call "John", is a deacon in his own home town, but when on a fishing trip he is a free-lance of the freest type, and he insisted upon attending the performance. He undoubtedly had an interesting and exciting time, but Tom Canadian, who accompanied him, confided to me the next morning that "Meester John, he bet twenty-five dollars on the Toms River Kid, and ze Kid he last only 'bout two, t'ree minute."

We finally dropped off to sleep, just in time for George, the cook, to pound on the cabin door, and tell us that breakfast was ready. The boat was already under way, and we were racing out through Biscayne Bay, with the long Royal Palm dock and its million dollars' worth of pleasure craft on our right, and Virginia Key on our left. When we started, the Bay was as smooth and inviting as the floor of a well kept skating rink, but by the time we had reached a point opposite the Fowey Rock Light, we caught a heavy breeze from the open sea, and our dainty craft, the Betty Lee, began to kick up her heels in a most unladylike manner. Finally, after a conference with the guide and the skipper, it was decided that we remain inside, between the Keys and the mainland, until the wind died down.

Of course we were anxious to go in search of big game, but fishing in a rough sea is liable to prove trying sport for a landsman. All day long we poked in and out

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among the keys, fishing for mangrove snappers and angel fish, and swearing at the weather. We unslung the small boat and ran over to "Parson" Jones's bungalow on Porgee Key, where we purchased a big basket of fruit and a gunny-bag full of giant sea-crawfish. These crustaceans, when properly cooked, are almost indistinguishable from lobster, and are also highly esteemed as bait by Florida fishermen.

That evening we ran into Caesar's "Creek"—channels through which the tides flow between the keys are called "creeks"—where we anchored.

A dozen times during the night I awoke, hoping to find that the wind had died down, but invariably the waves were lapping and pounding against the side of the boat, and a sprightly breeze was whistling cheerfully through the rigging.

The next morning the sea was rougher than ever, but patience was never one of my virtues, and I insisted that we make a try for the open sea. We ran bravely out, past Cocolobo Cay Club, and parallel with Key Largo, the waves, apparently mountain high, breaking over the unprotected rear deck. I was wild to catch a big fish, and hopefully trailed two hundred feet of twenty-one thread line over the churning water. But twenty years of non-residence had wholly unfitted me for the life of a sailor boy, and about eleven o'clock I retired to the cabin, with a pea-green complexion and a very unruly stomach. John staggered down, a few minutes later, to sympathize with me, but he, too, looked a trifle the worse for wear, and so decided to lie down for a while, until we were back again in smooth water.

Two days of our brief vacation gone, and not a single

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decent bite! That evening we played cards, and ran imaginary races, seeing which one could tell the biggest apparently unbelievable yarn in the most convincing manner. Tom had one very promising narrative, dealing with his experience while on a hunting trip in Quebec one winter. The temperature was so low that ice formed on the north side of the pot in which he was boiling his coffee! After that, we all went to bed and tried to sleep.

The next day was Sunday, Washington's birthday, and we awoke to find the sea as calm and placid as the water in the old oaken bucket. We had an early breakfast, and got under way shortly after six o'clock. We spent the entire morning cruising around the reefs which surrounded Carysfort Light. I have fished in all parts of the world, and at nearly all seasons of the year, but I have never seen fish, big or little, bite as they bit that day. We had started out in search of barracuda, those long, lean, grey wolves of the sea, and we found them, in herds and in droves. The barracuda is a slender, silver-colored fish, shaped like the pickerel of our Northern lakes, a powerful swimmer, and voracious to the last degree. In length, these ran from three to five feet, and when they hit the bait it was as if one had snagged a small aeroplane in full flight. At times one of the big fellows would repeatedly leap high in the air, endeavoring to throw the hook, but after we had learned to keep a tight line, we lost few that had been fairly struck. Our captain was a Barnegat man, and for that reason my friend, who is a graduate of Princeton, and he had much in common. The bonds of affection proved but temporary, however, for the skipper had not come South for HIS health. His fishing experience had been almost wholly con-

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fined to cod and mackerel, and he apparently had no idea of the horse power exerted by a thirty-pound barracuda at the end of 300 feet of line. So when we hooked our first few fish, he let the little boat continue on her way, despite the frenzied protests of the wielders of the rod and reel. Finally, a big strawberry-blond grouper, weighing about fifty pounds, and traveling with the speed of a pink Stutz raceabout, nearly ruined John, coming within an ace of detaching both of his arms at one and the same time. So a committee promptly waited on the Commodore, and instructed him regarding the rules and ethics of the game. He expostulated, insisting that it wore out the clutch of his engine to stop and start so often, but we speedily convinced him that we had not chartered the boat for the purpose of prolonging the life of her power plant.

Grouper is a corruption of the Portuguese name "garrupa" and the fish belongs in the seabass family. We caught them of all sizes and of many colors. Our largest one weighed almost sixty pounds, and its mouth spread was so great that one could readily insert a gallon lard pail. After being struck, a grouper generally starts for the bottom, and if allowed a little slack line, will soon have himself firmly ensconced among the rocks. Then one has to "pump" him out! no small job if the "pumper" be fragile and delicate and the "pumpee" hefty and resourceful. The pumping process consists in slowly raising the tip of the heavy rod, the tension usually being sufficient to start the fish, then, as the tip is lowered, the slack is reeled in, and the rod again elevated. Should this procedure fail, heavy tension may be applied, then the rod tip brought down very suddenly, letting the fish take out the



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slack. This often will serve to loosen his hold among the rocks, and afterward he can successfully be "pumped" out and brought to gaff. Once a heavy grouper has reached bottom, the man who finally leads him alongside has earned all the glory he gets out of the combat.

The hooks employed in taking these fish are fairly large, 12/0 or 10/0, and are arranged tandem, the lower hook being threaded on the upper. A four-foot piano wire leader is used, with a heavy brass swivel at the proximal end.

Both barracuda and grouper will take almost anything, but the best bait is a long strip of flesh from the belly wall of a barracuda or other large white fish. Mullet also serve admirably, and occasionally good catches are made with a bally-hoo, a small species of flying fish that is very plentiful in Southern waters and is the bait par excellence for kingfish.

The barracuda fights from the minute he feels the hook until he is gaffed, and as he swings around, in ever narrowing, shimmering circles, his shining, mother-of-pearl sides reflect the light, and can be seen while the fish is still far beneath the surface.

That afternoon I was reeling in a twenty-pound barracuda, and had him almost up to the boat, when he made a wild rush, and I saw that a big grouper with a Fatty Arbuckle body and a von Hindenburg countenance, was trying to take the bait away from him. The barracuda had been caught on the lower hook, and the upper one, with a portion of the bait attached, was hanging free. I swung the tip of the rod over, and, as the grouper snatched at the fragment, I succeeded in hooking him also. Both fish struggled for

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a moment, but the grouper was the heaviest and strongest, and quickly tore the barb out of the barracuda's mouth. The latter was far from grateful, however, and as I dragged the huge yellow bass up to the stern of the boat, the former captive made a last swift lunge at his competitor, and succeeded in nearly amputating his tail.

We decided to spend the night in Turtle Harbor, and just before we reached our anchorage, both of us got vicious strikes, and found that we had captured two small dolphins, weighing about ten pounds each. All of the smaller fish, if not too badly injured, were gaffed through the gills, and released, to be "caught again some other day."

Monday dawned fair, with a calm sea, and after an early breakfast, we started back toward Carysfort reef. A few miles from the Light lie the remains of the "Quoque," a big steel freighter that formerly hailed from Astoria, and near her, or, as many think, directly beneath her, the wreck of the ill-fated "Annabel." The water here is comparatively shallow, from twenty to fifty feet deep, and so clear that at midday one can easily study the topography of the ocean bed from the deck of a small vessel.

We caught our biggest fish in the neighborhood of the "Quoque"; long, fierce-looking barracuda, and huge, staring groupers, with an occasional amberjack.

We swung in, close to the big wreck, and shut off the engine. As the boat gradually slowed down, and finally stopped, we saw dozens of fish of all sizes, and of a score or more different shapes and colors, darting and playing about in the clear water. I reeled in my line until the bait lay just behind the stern of the boat,

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and about forty feet below the surface of the water. No sooner had it touched bottom than a ten-foot sand shark made a dash for it, and as the dainty morsel disappeared down his gullet, I struck, and struck hard. The ensuing jerk on the hooks was sufficient to turn the big fellow partly over, and we had a splendid side view of him. But that was all we did get. The next instant he had pointed his nose toward deep water, straightened out his steering gear, stepped on the gas, and was off, at the rate of ninety miles an hour. I threw on both drags of the big "Universal Star" reel, and pressed down on the thumb brake until it fairly smoked, but my efforts were fruitless. I could neither stop him nor turn him. Finally the spool was emptied, the cord snapped, and my newly found acquaintance proceeded gaily on his way, with one long green whisker, representing eight dollars' worth of justly "Celebrated" tarpon line, dangling from his lower lip.

John said the performance reminded him very much of the experience of a friend of his who once succeeded in pulling a half-grown grizzly bear out of a hole by means of its tail.

Shortly afterward, he too had an unfortunate accident. He is somewhat of a naturalist, as well as an engineer, and he had long evinced a desire to investigate the anatomy of that Zeppelin of the sea, a Portuguese man-of-war. Tom Canadian had dutifully warned him that they were worthless as pets, but John insisted that he had yet to find an animal that when properly treated would not warm up to him. So as we rested on the after deck, following luncheon, John captured one of the shiny physalians, and hauled it aboard. A second later he was prancing gracefully

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up and down the deck, rubbing his blistered hands and invoking Irish blessings on the helpless wanderer. An olive oil bath relieved the tension, and soothed the injured skin, but failed to revive the victim's interest in Nature Study.

We were short of fresh water, so we ran back to Cocolobo Cay for the night, and the next morning, through the courtesy of Mr. Chastien, the Club Steward, we replenished our store.

On Tuesday, we fished along the L and M beacons, and added one more species of fish to our already varied catch. This was a tuna, and while it weighed only about seven pounds, it put up an excellent fight.

Members of the Miami Anglers Club, an organization which, by the way, deserves the enthusiastic support of every fisherman who visits Miami, assured us that this fish was a rare visitor in these waters.

The following day we spent in the Gulf Stream, vainly looking for sailfish. Luck was against us, and not a single sailfish did we see. Our old friends, the barracuda and groupers were there, however, but our time was short, and so the prow of the "Betty Lee" was turned toward home, and that night we docked alongside the pavilion, our brief but delightful winter vacation ended.

## REELFOOT SNAPSHOTS

**R**EELFOOT LAKE, down in sunny Tennessee, is the Mecca of all good hunters and fishermen.

This small inland sea, stretching diagonally across Obion County, covers an area of almost 76,000 acres, and fairly teems with fish, all the year round, while from November first to the latter part of January it is a duck shooters' paradise.

I have hunted mallard and canvas-back in all parts of the United States, from Chesapeake Bay to southern California, and from the Dakotas to Florida, but nowhere else have I found gamebirds so plentiful or so dependable as in northwestern Tennessee.

The Lake itself is a large heterogenous collection of white cypress stumps and tall marsh grass, grid-ironed with fallen tree trunks, and almost completely surrounded with water. If it were not for the stumps, one might mistake it for a Kansas thoroughfare during the touring season, for the foundation is composed of rich, black mud, and in early winter the supernatant liquid is of the color and consistency of pea soup.

As the authorized press agent of old Reelfoot, I had spoken so frequently and so enthusiastically of the benefits to be derived from a short visit to this distinctly rural retreat that last Fall four of my scatter gun friends decided that they, too, would participate. The party, which originally consisted of A. Tyler Hemingway, a lumberman, and a renowned quail hunter; Judge Leonard Waddell, the eminent jurist; Dr. M. L. Bishoff, Assistant Chief Surgeon of the Santa Fe System; Dr. J. Wallace Beil, the distin-

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guished ophthalmologist, and myself, had planned to start South the Saturday after Thanksgiving, but Fate decided otherwise.

An important business matter which turned up at the last minute detained Mr. Hemingway, Judge Waddell developed a badly swollen arm as a result of vaccination, and was held back two days, and Dr. Bishoff's train was late, and he failed to make connections at St. Louis on Sunday morning. The accident was probably a blessing in disguise, for Bishoff was compelled to spend a whole day in the sleepy old burg, and went to church, for the first time, to my distinct knowledge, in many years.

Beil and I caught the Mobile and Ohio "meteor" (two hundred and ten miles in four hundred and eighty minutes!) for Union City, where I had asked the Johnson Brothers to meet us and carry us over to old Samburg, about six miles west of Hornbeck. The Johnson boys, Carl, "Lanny," and "Babe," are an institution in Union City, for each and every one of them is a born duck hunter, and can handle a pump gun as effectively and gracefully as a Kansas housewife can swing a fly swatter.

The roads were typical Tennessee turnpikes, hand raked and feather dusted, and our suitcases, guns, and duffle bags (if you do not possess a duffle bag, buy one on your way home tonight, whether you think you need it or not. It will prove one of the most sensible and practical purchases you ever made), were speedily packed away in the tonneau and Beil crawled into the middle of the stack.

I, being old, and fat and bald, shared the front seat with the driver. The twenty miles of thoroughfare

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slipped by like a long strip of brown silk ribbon, and before six o'clock, we were seated at the long table in the dining room of Elbert Nations' caravansary, with the waters of old Reelfoot lapping the shore fifty feet away.

We felt sure that Bishoff would be down on the evening train, and left instructions with the boys to watch for him and bring him into camp as soon as he alighted on Tennessee soil. This was not a difficult matter after his Sunday's experience. Jack Hogg, my guide of previous years, was awaiting our arrival, and he had secured the services of his bosom friend, D. Shaw, for Dr. Beil. Bishoff drew "Barber" Cartright, a young gentleman of many and divers attainments, full of pep and good works, who was a professional baseball pitcher during the summer, a fisherman at times, a guide of sorts, and a barber on Saturday.

Cartright is a swell dresser, and I always thought him something of a dude until an accident proved to me that he was as full of grit as a Sandy Andy. A bunch of us were bound for Rag Point Pocket one day, and "Barber" skipped out ahead on scout duty. In his hurry and enthusiasm, he forgot that mule foot roots sometimes cling closer than a brother, and while hurriedly traversing a big, icy puddle, the toe of his dainty number eleven wader got caught in a bonnet tendril, and poor Cartright measured his manly length in the mushy water. To make matters worse, while floundering around and recovering his gun, he turned over three or four times so Robinson Crusoe had nothing on him when he came stumbling back to meet us ten minutes later. We urged him to return immediately to the hotel for a change of clothing, but not

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"Barber." He stood on a tiny dry spot, beneath a giant cypress, stripped to the skin, a la Godiva, wrung out his clothes, poured the water out of his boots, redressed, took a swig of hot coffee out of one of the "Ferrostats," and was ready to hit the trail again!

The method of attack at Reelfoot varies with the weather, and with the proclivities of the prey. In November and early December much of the shooting is done from improvised grass blinds, the bottoms of the small, sharp-nosed hunting boats serving as decks.

Occasionally, for some strange reason, appreciable only to Providence and the ducks, the incoming birds all make for one small area, generally some spot which has been used as a feeding ground on the previous night. The hunters who have been lucky enough to choose this favored locality quickly secure their limit, and then make way for less fortunate brethren who have been attracted from various other parts of the lake by the fusilade. One bright November morning, ten of us shot out of a single, small grass blind which lay almost within rifle shot of the hotel, and so plentiful were our winged guests that all of the boats pulled in shortly after luncheon. Personally, I am not strong for the thickly populated game resorts of this sort for, aside from the danger of accidents, one never definitely knows who killed the duck. I well remember the chagrin of some of the members of our party, however, at the seemingly miraculous escape of three little teals that wheeled in over the decoys, skidded just in time, and sped southward to the tune of a regular bombardment from pump guns, automatics and doubles. Of the twenty-seven shots fired, not one apparently touched a feather! Jack Hogg, the best duck shot that



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I have ever known, didn't do a blessed thing all afternoon but "explain" how it happened! But Jack's reputation was already made, he didn't need to worry. I once saw him drop five green winged teal, those little red Stutzes of the Anatidae family, into a specified pothole as they came whistling by, with five shots from his old '97 Winchester.

Blackjacks are frequently attracted to the open water by a liberal display of "blocks" (wooden decoys), but they seldom stop, and are shot "en passage." When the ice begins to form, tree blinds are widely used. These consist of hollow stumps, with or without bush limbs, cypress knees, and board platforms (built around, or between, trees or stumps). One of these, christened "The Sidewalk," by my old friend, "Buckskin" Smith, is a battle scarred veteran of many seasons. When the weather is bitterly cold, the use of an elevated shooting stand of this type is rather a chilly proposition, but with a continual string of mallards pitching into the nearby air holes, physical discomfort is a trivial matter.

Judge Waddell arrived on Tuesday, and drew a handsome and precocious youth by the name of "Clyde" for pusher. The judge is a finished artist with a Remington Auto-loader, and begged his young cicerone to lead him forth to a favorite blackjack retreat where his skill might properly be exemplified. Nothing loath, Clyde paddled him out to a big log in the center of about a hundred acres of deep water, and deposited him there, while the young boatman haled forth in quest of some easily frightened "Blackies" in the adjoining cypress swamps. Clyde had considerable difficulty in finding the game, and when he

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returned to his charge, an hour and a half later, a strong breeze having arisen in the meantime, he found an enraged jurist attired in sour temper and a very wet pair of khaki breeches, seated astride a slick log, impatiently awaiting him. After this experience, the Judge abandoned "tree" shooting altogether and decimated the mallard and grey duck families up in the vicinity of "Russian pond."

Every part of the big lake has been named, although only a natural born Reelfooter can recollect them all. The guides speak of "Red Point Pocket," the "Glory Hole," "Big Starve" and "Little Starve" just as intimately and affectionately as you and I discuss "*Impetigo Contagiosa*" and "*Periadenites mucosa nectorica recurrens*." How on earth they can do it is beyond me.

Dr. Beil and I both are double enthusiasts, but we were hopelessly in the minority. If the Lewis machine gun were only made in twelve guage, I feel sure that it would have a wide sale among the duck hunting fraternity. Personally, I plead guilty to being a "library" sportsman of the most depraved type, for I was tied closely down to business for a great many years, and practically all the shooting I got was in my imagination. So I sublimated my earnings, and when the pressure became too great, sneaked out and purchased another new gun, much to the consternation of my good wife and the joy of my young son. At present, I possess an F. E. Fox, a B. H. E. Parker, a Sovereign Grade Greener, a 20 bore Lefever, and a Smith single trigger quail gun, besides a closet full of smaller fry. The little Fox is my especial pet, however, and was my companion on the Reelfoot trip this

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year. It weighs only six and one-half pounds, with twenty-eight inch barrels, and alongside the regulation blunderbuss, it looks like a gold mounted toy. But for quick work, and for reaching out and getting them, it is a most admirable little weapon, and I treasure it very highly.

Dr. Beil also shoots a Fox ejector. He had never before done much wild fowling, and at first it was a bit difficult for him to connect, but D. Shaw took him out among the coots for a practice morning, and, while slaughtering a small boat-load of these wily bipeds, he learned all about "swinging" and how far to lead. For the benefit of the members of the S. P. C. A. or rather S. P. C. C. (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Coots), I will say that coot pie is delicious, and that not a bird was wasted. On Thursday, we shared a blind with an enthusiastic and mercurial young Nimrod from Kentucky, who was just learning how to use a Winchester automatic. We pulled into the tall grass about 7:45 and had hardly gotten settled when we were startled by five firecracker-like explosions from our friend's fusee. "What on earth are you shooting at?" Beil yelled across at him. The only reply was a few smothered exclamations and swear words. That evening we learned from his guide that while pulling into the blind, a large spider web had caught on the brim of the Kentuckian's cap, and, when he looked up, a few minutes later, and saw a big velvet-backed Reelfoot spider prancing across the horizon, he mistook it for a frightened Susie mallard, and emptied his gun before he discovered the mistake!

All too quickly the week drew to a close. On Saturday morning, a cold drizzling rain set in, and kept

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up nearly all day, and my spirit was troubled, for Tennessee country roads are like the little girl with the ringlet, "when they are good, they are very, very, very good, and when they are bad, they are horrid." We pulled in at four, cleaned and oiled our guns, ate supper, and packed up. Colonel "Lanny" Johnson, with three small cars of an inexpensive but well known make, was awaiting our pleasure, and soon everything was on board, including a gunny-bag full of ducks for each man (and twenty-five mallards is quite a sack-full). At the last minute, the lamps on one of the Lizzies refused to functionate, and we all stood around in the rain and offered advice while the drivers took the car to pieces and put it back together again. Finally, at 7 p. m., we started for Union City. With the roads in good condition, the run can easily be made in an hour, but that evening the trip was a nightmare. The transport Commander had expected trouble, and had arranged to have a man with a team of sturdy little mules meet us at the foot of the famous (or rather infamous) Samburg hill. This picturesque incline, which is about a quarter of a mile long, is tilted at an angle of approximately forty-five degrees, and, when moist, closely resembles a giant beaver slide. Naturally conservative, I elected to take it on foot, and in "low," and if ever I yearned for a set of tin toe nails, it was then! Finally, with the blessed little mules puffing and snorting and steaming, and the little cars stewing and bubbling and knocking, the caravan succeeded in making the grade, and we thankfully clambered aboard again, liberally plastered with yellow mud, but filled with gratitude. I will spare the reader a complete description of that harrow-

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ing trip. Nine different times we got out and helped push those muddy cars up the greasy sides of miniature mountains, and it was a quarter after twelve, on Sunday morning, when we reached the station.

Once, poor Bishoff lost his footing and took a header into an adjacent puddle. But the bottom of the little pond was quite soft, in fact semi-fluid, and after we had scraped the mud off of the Santa Fe Official with one of the emergency shovels, he was found to be uninjured and practically as good as new.

We were a tough looking bunch when we boarded the train, and the Pullman conductor gazed upon us with a haughty and supercilious eye. He didn't appear to care at all for the ducks, which we of course insisted upon bringing with us, but finally we compromised the matter and he let us cord the over-stuffed gunny-bags up on the rear platform. And thus ended our pilgrimage to Reelfoot.

## AFTER POLAR BEARS

THE POLAR, or ice bear, *Thalarcios maritime*, is one of the largest of the carnivora. It is also, in my opinion, the handsomest and most attractive member of the bear family.

I have always wanted to add a polar bear skin to my trophy list, but a weary old leopard of the dermatological jungles is generally so busy combating the ills of the flesh that he has little time to give to Arctic exploration and sport.

The recent depression, however—I trust it can be so classified by the time this story is in print—convinced me that he who does not gather roses when he may is very likely to go through life roseless, and for this reason, in November, 1931, through the Bennett Bureau, of Oslo, I chartered the "Isbjorn," out of Tromso, for the summer season of 1932.

Shooting, or walrus, sloops of this type are especially constructed wooden vessels, with very thick hulls, built to resist the action of the ice. A steel ship would not last a day in a polar ice field. The chief motive power is a Diesel or Bolinder crude oil engine, of from 100 to 200 horsepower. Sails also are provided, as a safety measure in case of accident. The better vessels are supplied with radio. I should not care to go out in a boat unless it was so equipped.

I am a firm believer in the old adage that "the early bird gets the worm," and for that reason decided to leave America in May and spend the months of June and July among the floes. As matters turned out, we did arrive a few weeks too soon, for the ice hampered

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us at almost every turn, but what would an Arctic expedition be if ice and snow were omitted?

In the selection of shooting territory, one can take either Greenland or Spitsbergen and its neighboring islands, Bear Island, Franz Josef Land, and Nova Zembla. We chose the latter. My wife, our eighteen-year-old daughter, Emmy Lou, and I reached Bergen, Norway, on May 14, and the next day, Dick, our son and my companion on a recent African-Asiatic expedition, who had been doing some special work at the University of Edinburgh, joined us.

On the next day but one, we started up the coast to Tromso, aboard the express steamer "Polarlys." Four days of pleasant travel, dodging in and out of the fjords, and stopping at half a hundred little fishing villages, brought us to Tromso, the Nairobi of the North. It is in this small island port that the majority of the polar expeditions are outfitted, and the place is replete with reminiscences of historic personages.

The Norwegians are a practical, matter-of-fact people, however, and sentiment plays little part in their lives. The sea owes them a living, and they go out and collect it. Cold and wet and hunger are no strangers to them. They accept suffering and even misery as part of the day's work, and to boot, probably gamble on the return, by sharing the catch, in lieu of a meager wage.

Briefly, we found the "Isbjorn" a most admirable little ship, and our crew, the skipper, Captain Bergersen, and the guide and interpreter, Ernst Sorensen, all that could be desired.

We investigated Bear Island, ran east along the

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edge of the pack ice to Hope Island, and then slowly worked our way up to South Cape. From there, we sailed up the west coast of Spitsbergen, stopping at Advent Bay and King's Bay, and finally, on the tenth day out, we rounded Cloven Cliff and The Norways, 80° N., and entered our shooting grounds. The hunting is done along the edge of the pack, and among the floes. Northern Spitsbergen is marked by numerous cliffs and coastal indentations. The largest of these inlets are Red Bay, Wood Bay, and Wiide Bay. Hinlopen Strait, with Lady Franklin Bay just north of it, separates the mainland, known as West Spitsbergen, from Northeast Land. Several miles to the north lie the Seven Islands, discovered it is believed, by Hudson, in 1607—although Northeast Land was not explored until recent years, and still is, to a great extent terra incognita. South of Hinlopen Strait lie William Barents' and Edge's Islands, and east of these, the Wyches, all notable bear and walrus territory.

We had hoped to secure a number of polar cubs for the Swope Park Zoo in Kansas City, but were not even so fortunate as to see one, let alone capture one. All of the bears we encountered were of he-man size, and the majority of them were hungry, and out looking for something to eat.

With us, as with nearly all sportsmen, luck ran in streaks. On the first day Emmy Lou got a good one, a trifle gaunt, but with its winter coat still in excellent condition. It measured eight feet, two inches, and weighed approximately 700 pounds. It was hunting snads—a variety of small seal—on the floes. The noise made by our ship frightened it, and it started for a big ice field which skirted the mainland. Just as it



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hesitated on the edge of an ice cake, before plunging into the water, the little University of Kansas co-ed broke its neck with a soft-nosed bullet from her 6.5 millimeter Mannlicher-Schoenauer, at about 100 yards. It was her first big game, and she was as proud as Punch.

After that we got a bear a day, for nearly a week. In weight, they varied from 600 to 1000 pounds, but had they been fat, they would have tipped the scales at nearly one-third more.

Not all of them acted as Emmy Lou's first one did. The sporting way is to stalk or pursue them on the ice, but this is easier said than done. Ice fields, if of any size—and these are the sort which Bruin frequents—are full of snad holes. These breathing orifices, which measure about two feet in diameter, with a funnel-shaped top, are made by the seals when the ice is thin and kept open as each new layer of ice forms. I have seen them in floes eight or ten feet thick. When they are occupied, as it were, that is, being used by seals, they are readily seen; but when deserted, the opening is generally covered by a thin layer of snow and ice. The "lid" may be slightly raised above the general surface, but commonly it is not. The material of which it is composed is extremely fragile, and the average snad hole lid is just about strong enough to support the weight of a cotton-tail rabbit.

You can readily imagine what would happen to a 200-pound man who inadvertently stepped on one! He would shoot down through the ice with the speed and accuracy of a well directed lead plummet. When he came up, the probabilities are that he would miss

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the opening which had been the cause of his downfall. Can one imagine a predicament worse than that?

In order to safeguard one's self as much as possible, when negotiating suspicious ground of this sort one carries a "haakpik," which is a sort of heavy alpenstock. If properly managed, the long handle of the haak-pik will prevent one from falling entirely through. But it is ticklish work for a fat old man like me. While I was, of course, a little bit afraid of the bears (for I am but human), I was mortally afraid of falling through a snad hole. Think of having one's body preserved indefinitely by the cold water, floating and bobbing about for years in the Arctic seas, probably ultimately to be devoured by the very bears that one had set out to kill!

Dick was more optimistic, but that is a privilege of youth—and inexperience.

On the mainland the chances for a successful stalk are better. But bears do not frequent the shores. They prefer to remain out in the pasture, and feed at the table that Nature has so generously provided. Just as in Indo-China the grass follows the water, the deer the grass, and the tigers the deer, so in the North temperature and water supply the ice, the ice supplies a home for the seals, and the bears feed on the seals.

Occasionally, when we discovered a bear in inaccessible territory, we would lure him out into the open, and within range. There are two or three ways of doing this. One is for two men to play seal. They quietly steal toward the bear until they are a few hundred yards from him. Then they openly crawl toward him for a short distance, and finally lie down on the ice,

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and try to act like a seal. A favorite stunt is to scratch one's left ear with the right heel.

My dear friend, Stefansson, first told me of this method, and assured me that he could do it. But he is tall and slender, and graceful. I am not. In making excursions of this sort, one should always take along a rifle, otherwise a tragedy may ensue. While the man knows that he is only playing, the bear doesn't.

Another and often successful method is to lure them out with blubber smoke. This plan is particularly effective in foggy or misty weather. The boat is run up alongside the ice, with the floes or field to windward. The ship's cook is then petitioned, and he fills his stove with blubber and seal fat. The odor of the burning fat will carry for miles. It is one which few hungry bears can successfully resist. When they smell it, they come. Once, on the west shore of Hinlopen Strait, by this simple means we persuaded a big old fellow to travel fully five miles on very rough ice.

In my experience, polar bears are harder to kill than either tigers or lions. As Dick said, they eat lead like they eat seals. They are tremendously muscular, which may account for at least some of their extraordinary resistance to ordinary wounds. The neck of our largest one, which was a thin male weighing about half a ton, was more than thirty-six inches in circumference, and as hard as iron. The head is small and pointed.

The majority of the shots secured, with the exception of one bear that had to be killed while in the water, were at distances of from 100 to 300 yards. We found a shoulder or body hit of very little avail. A spine shot should do the work, but in so large and

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shaggy an animal, the position of the spine usually is problematic.

Emmy Lou used a light but powerful rifle, of 6.5 millimeter caliber.

The guns employed in seal shooting are of this size, but handle a slightly longer shell than that of the Mannlicher. They are Norwegian Service rifles, with Krag-Jorgensen actions, and 26-inch barrels and are well constructed, and handy. Both our skipper and the first mate were experienced sealers, and experts in the use of this long-barreled weapon.

Should a visitor desire to avoid the trouble and expense of bringing his rifles with him, he is safe in depending upon one of these army rifles. A new one can be purchased at Tromso for one hundred kroners (about twenty gold dollars). The cartridges are six cents each.

Like all gun cranks, Dick and I prefer to use our own artillery. We sometimes possess more rifles than we have an opportunity to use, but that makes no difference to us, our sales resistance continues very low. He sticks to his .375 Hoffman, which gave such splendid service on the last African-Asiatic expedition. For some time, I have been using Mausers, of 9.3 millimeter caliber, weapons in which I have learned to have great confidence. This gun, which probably is the most popular in Africa today, is inexpensive, and the ammunition for it is readily obtainable in all countries where big game abounds.

The latest addition to my arsenal was built for me by Sauer, of Suhl and is equipped with a 4X Zeiss telescope sight. Owing to my age, and impaired vision,

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I had thought my rifle shooting days about over. My experience with this modern instrument of precision has convinced me that my career as a rifleman has just begun! A reliable and properly mounted telescope certainly is of inestimable value to an old man like me.

## THE QUAIL OF OLD FORT SUPPLY

**D**OWN in northwestern Oklahoma, some twenty miles from Woodward, and a long biscuit's throw from the Panhandle line, stands a little group of buildings which marks the site of old Fort Supply, a frontier outpost which has at various times served as headquarters for many of our heroes of the Civil War, notably General Phil Sheridan, and the brilliant but ill-fated Custer.

Houses were built for permanency in those days, and the roomy, Southern style quarters still stand today, as firm and solid as if their foundations had been laid 10 years ago, instead of 50.

The surrounding country is sandy and rolling, marked by occasional thickets of wild plum and scrub oak, and checkered with barbed wire encompassed ranches. It was at one time a great cattle country, but the seas of prairie grass have given way to maize, kaffir corn and sorghum, and the wily and intractable cow pony has been replaced by the ubiquitous Ford.

Some years ago, Fort Supply was converted into a State Hospital, and in the last half decade, under the management of my old friend, Dr. E. L. Bagby, it has developed into a model institution for the care of the mentally deranged.

In addition to his many scientific attainments, Dr. Bagby is a quail hunter of the old school, and a finished artist with a Remington auto-loader, so when I received his invitation "to come down and meet the quails of old Fort Supply," I did not wait to be urged. Next to his devotion to his charming wife and their

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bonny little daughter, Mary Lou, the Doctor's affections center on his splendid kennel of pointers, and "Queen," "Old Crow," and little "Queenie," certainly are worthy of admiration. Out of Queen's litter for 1920, three promising puppies have been retained, but these will not be ready for the field until this fall.

I reached Woodward at five, one bright Sunday afternoon, and my host loaded me and my baggage into a big Buick car and whirled me out over the sand hills so quickly that I had but a passing glimpse of the former "two gun man's paradise." At a point about midway between Woodward and the Fort, Dr. Bagby suddenly slowed up, and called my attention to a big bunch of Bob Whites, scurrying across the road just ahead of us. "How long will it take you to put your gun together?" he asked. "About ten seconds," I replied, as I slid out of my great coat and grabbed for the gun case. My host scratched a handful of shells out of the grip as I snapped the fore end on the little Fox, and a half minute later I was gliding through the tall roadside grass, hot on the trail of the little brown birdies.

Evidently they were unsophisticated, for when the first three got up, and I missed with my second barrel (it was a wonder I hit with the first one), I reloaded, and had walked ten steps before four more whirled out. By this time I was cool and collected, and both loads were properly placed. The next, and last two, also flew straight into trouble, and when we climbed back into the car, I felt that the long train ride had not been in vain, even if I did not get another bird. But Fortune smiled again, some three miles farther on, and, in the fast gathering dusk, I made another

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double. That night, after a supper fit for a king, followed by a sight-seeing ramble about the moonlit grounds, I turned in, and slept the sleep of the just.

The next morning, about eight o'clock, we started out in the car. Dr. Bagby is a psychologist, and he has figured it out that the quails feed in the early morning, retire to the thickets and hedges and tall grass, where they will be safe from the hawks, during the middle of the day, and go again out into the fields for food late in the afternoon. At Fort Supply, we picked up the doctor's boon hunting companion, Mr. Robert L. Vaughn, a tall, keen-eyed Missourian of sixty, who walks like a man of twenty, and shoots like one of thirty, and sped away, across the Beaver Creek hills. A friend, Mr. Arlie Hudson, had been kind enough to invite us to shoot over his land the first day, and after a ten-mile drive, we parked the car and started to beat out a big thicket which lay along a small creek flanked by fields of kaffir corn.

The dogs worked well, but the birds were too speedy for Arlie and me. Bob and the doctor were right in their element, however, and if Bob's old '97 Winchester failed to draw blood, Bagby, with his automatic, stayed on the job until the bird was either mortally wounded or scared to death. Finally, we worked out into the open, where I was more at home. The three other guns were cylinder bored, and while I was shooting "scatter" loads in my right barrel (and, by the way, I do not think that either "scatter" or "brush" loads ever give the even, dependable pattern that one secures with an accurately ground cylinder), it was a joy to catch an occasional old rooster with the closely choked left, long after my friends had



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ceased bombarding him. I pulverized one at sixty-six long steps, and another was at least sixty yards away when he ran out of gas.

At noon we cut across lots to our car, and luncheon, with a fairly good bag, three weary dogs, and four very tired pairs of legs. After discussing the matter, we decided to run over to Mr. Hudson's home ranch for an hour or two. The shooting was close in, but he felt we could locate two or three bunches of birds.

On our way back, we came to a short but heavily undergrown hedge row. Bagby insisted that he "smelt" quail. So Arlie and I, with the dogs, disembarked, and straddled the row, Arlie taking the outside. We hadn't gone twenty yards before the dogs "froze," and, with nerves aquiver, we crept up. I heard a wild whirr on the opposite side of the hedge, and Arlie's gun snap (he had forgotten to load it). Through the hedge ahead of us, I saw what looked like a million birds. I threw up the little Fox, held high, and cut loose. By some mischance, both barrels went off, almost together, and the heavy charge of Ballastite nearly ruined me. But two quails dropped, and, as I crawled back through the fence, I heard Bob say "Gee, that fat city Doc certainly can land on 'em!" and to this day, Bob does not know that if those birds had been carrying accident insurance, both of their widows would now be rich!

The flock had headed eastward and dropped into a big, heavily weeded ravine, about six hundred yards away. We left the Buick at the side of the road, and all four of us tore out across the fields after them. Fan-wise, we started through the thicket of dead sunflowers, the dogs charging back and forth as if pos-

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sessed. I was first to reach the edge of the big gully, and found a brush pile about the size of the Woolworth building, confronting me. I circled the margin for forty yards, then clambered aboard, and walking out on an old dead apple tree, teetered up and down with all the force of my dainty 240 pounds. At the second oscillation, a regular swarm of quails buzzed out. A big bunch of rabbits would not have surprised me, but myriads of whirring birds, springing out almost from between my legs, were too much for my overwrought nerves, and I banged away, right and left, without touching a feather. Bob, Arlie, and the Medico were too far away to get in on the deal, and when they came tearing through the brush a moment later, and asked how many I had killed, I felt like thirty cents.

The birds were now scattered up and down the broad ditch for a distance of a half mile or more. With the aid of Queen and Old Crow, we managed to get up six small delegations, and, as is usually the case with singles and doubles, we experienced little difficulty in grassing practically every one of them.

About four o'clock, we reached the ranch house, and as it was time to start home, we bade Mr. Hudson goodbye, and headed for Supply.

The next morning, it was decided that we should go down Beaver Creek, and hunt on some of the small ranches lying north of the river. We were either lacking in eloquence, or hospitality was at a premium, for three different times we were refused permission to "help save the kaffir crop," and it was not until we were some twenty miles northeast of the Fort that we had an opportunity to once more try our luck. Bob

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is an indefatigable hunter, and when he saw a likely looking spot, he would hop out and investigate it, loping across the field, parallel with the car, as easily and almost as speedily as a native jackrabbit. The doctor and I were beating out the yard of an old deserted shack when we heard Bob's Winchester bark in an adjacent field, and we knew he had located them. The birds made for a big prairie hay pasture, dotted with thickets of wild plum, which lay just west of the road, with Bob and the dogs in hot pursuit. The wind was raw, and the going hard, but back and forth across that ground we went, combing it as thoroughly as if we were searching for a diamond necklace. There must have been at least forty birds in the bunch, and after two hours of hard work, we had accounted for just one less than half that number.

The neighboring territory had been pretty closely grazed, so we decided to swing to the south, cross the river again, and try the place where I had killed my last two birds on the preceding Sunday. There was a deserted tenement house on the premises, and as we paraded through the old orchard, I saw fully half a hundred shotgun shells scattered about. So I concluded that some one else had beaten us to it. And they had. Bob remembered that there was a small pasture, containing a half section or more of land, about two miles to the northeast, which, because of its comparative inaccessibility, probably would prove fruitful. Doctor Bagby was averse to more exercise, so Bob and I, with the dogs, cut across the kaffir fields, toward the promised land, and the doctor took the car and started out to circle the two sections and meet us on the north line. The walking was heavy

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because of the sand, and the poor dogs were badly worried by burrs, but half an hour later we were again on firm ground, forging our way toward the plum thickets. The first time we drew a blank but the next oasis, located around the base of a small hill, proved to be inhabited, and the birds went up, like an exploding bunch of firecrackers, right under our noses. After the fusilade, we could find only one quail, and I felt morally certain that Bob had killed it. While exploring the hillside, however, I ran across a large, fat jackrabbit that had accidentally got into the line of fire and innocently perished. We curried that butte, fore and aft, for an hour, and got only one more quail, a cripple. Finally, in disgust, we started across the flat, to the third plum thicket. The grass was short, and the ground smooth and apparently level, the poorest possible hiding place for a quail, but that little valley was literally studded with them! Maude, Jr., was my retriever that morning, and as the birds got up by ones and twos, I fell into the psychological state that is probably common to Ad. Topperwein and Fred Gilbert, but exceedingly uncommon to me. I simply couldn't miss 'em!

But all good things must end, and after a hot three-quarters of an hour, the field was pretty well mopped up. So, regretfully, we once more stowed our belongings and ourselves into the big car, and pointed the front of the radiator homeward.

## THE INITIATION OF RAYMOND

*Where the rough granite jetties run far out to sea,  
And the water is clear and blue,  
I think a big tarpon is waiting for me,  
And I know one is waiting for you.*

—*Lays of Aransas Pass.*

**R**AYMOND James De Lano is an eminent practical psychologist, and a political power in his own home town. Not infrequently the two go together. He has a smile that is worth a million dollars, and his heart is as big as a Texas potato patch. He has shot big horn sheep in Wyoming, kadiak bears in Alaska, and chipmunks on the Mission Hills golf course, and he thinks nothing of going out on Whitefish Lake and annexing forty-nine pickerel before breakfast.

But up to a few months ago he had never caught a tarpon. When it comes to dealing with problems of this kind, he possesses a one track mind, and in our frequent conversations on the subject, I found that Raymond was spending practically all of his spare time thinking about this comparatively minor deficiency.

He would invite me to take luncheon with him at the City Club, not because he thought I might be hungry, or because little Anna is the best waitress west of the Mississippi River, but because he wanted to discuss Florida house-boats, and their relationship to tarpon fishing.

And when he brought his wife and his charming daughter to call on us, he would sit and politely talk about golf scores, and the advantages of the Country Club District, and the horror of the Cromwell for Governor boom,

## THE INITIATION OF RAYMOND

only a few minutes at a time. Then he would diplomatically bring the conversation around to deep sea monsters, and the innate possibilities of a vacation at Useppa Island, or Long Key, or Aransas Pass, or even far off Tampico. And when he stood up, with his hands in his pockets, and his legs spread apart, and gazed at the beautifully mounted but rather obese form of my son Dick's first Silver King, or, rather, Silver Queen, the only stuffed fish which my wife has ever allowed to enter our little home, his eyes would glisten, and his breath would come and go in short pants, just like that of a New Yorker who for the first time in four or five years gazes on a virgin bottle of Scotch whiskey.

In desperate cases of this kind I have found it best to keep quiet and play the role of innocent bystander. Then at least I have the appearance of being blameless.

But two days before Dick and I were to leave for our annual vacation at Aransas Pass, De Lano dropped into the office, and I could see that his spirit was troubled. I thought he probably wanted only a prescription but I soon found that it was not medical services at all that he required.

What he really needed was moral support. He is a construction engineer, and builds ten story brick flats by the gross. Just at the moment, he was in the midst of an intensive building campaign, and the carpenters and floor scrapers were throwing rocks at each other, and the plasterers had just struck for twenty-seven dollars a day. So, like the philosopher that he is, he decided to go fishing. Dick and I were delighted, for a better sportsman never lived, and it was a simple matter to wire Captain Ed Cotter to secure an additional guide and oarsman for the party.

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Forty-eight hours later we were Texas bound, and a thousand-mile ride brought us to the little city of Aransas Pass, that gate to a piscatorial paradise.

Two of our former boatmen, James Ellis and Godfrey Roberts, were waiting at the Port Aransas wharf to greet us, and a skillful and capable young man had been secured to handle the third skiff. At that time all of the tarpon fishing at Port Aransas was done from small boats, although launches were used in transporting the fishermen to and from the mouth of the Pass. The deep channel is kept clear by the use of huge dredgers, and is about two miles long, and a quarter of a mile wide. Laterally, it is guarded by jetties, composed of huge granite boulders, which extend upward out of the water for a distance of four or five feet. During the tarpon season, from May until November, the big fish feed along the inside and outside of these walls, and are caught by trolling with mullet.

The outside of the south jetty is the best territory, but the water is frequently both rough and muddy, and much of the fishing is done outside the north wall. When the weather is promising, the top of the jetty is lined with amateur and market fishermen, in quest of sheepshead, mackerel, and other fish. Cane poles are used, the longest that I have ever seen, with shrimp for bait. The ubiquitous shark is always on the job, hungry and alert, and woe betide the struggling finny captive that manages to fight its way into deep water! For this reason, every effort is made to keep the tarpon as near the jetties as possible after they are hooked. Sharks hesitate to rush into the shallow water, where they can be seen.

It is worth a trip to Aransas Pass to sit and watch one of your friends handle his first tarpon. They go forth

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in fear and trembling, and, if successful, Foch, at the end of the world war, could not return more triumphant.

Dick is only 15, but he always manages to break up all of the tackle in the trunk. One July day in 1921, he lost fourteen hooks and nearly a thousand feet of line in nine hours, so I have learned to take no chances with him. Mr. Ellis says it is because he thinks too "abruptly." I now start him out with a seventy-two thread line, and a 9-0 vom Hoff reel, and if he should tie into a whale, or a thousand-pound porpoise, it is the fish's fault and not mine.

Mr. De Lano was similarly equipped. Personally, I prefer an eighteen thread line for the first few fish, and then, if they are biting freely, I change to a nine thread. It goes against the grain to use cobweb tackle and hook only two tarpon a week—and lose both of them. As my old friend, Dr. Charles Gosney, once said, when I expostulated with him for shooting a mudhen on the water, "Ah, let's get a mess first, and after that you can bang away at them in the air as much as you want to!"

But in De Lano's case, I had reckoned wrongly. The first day he hooked three, and landed two of them, handling his rod like an expert. The second morning he fared forth with a reel full of eighteen thread line, and after the third day he stuck to blue-button tackle.

Verily, had he remained at Aransas a fortnight longer, I believe he would have been dragging them in on Clark's spool cotton!

Not content with nine hours of trolling, he spent the spare daylight trying to get pictures of leaping fish. More luck than skill is required for this, however, and he did not come out nearly so well as he deserved.



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Both Dick and he are enthusiastic swimmers, but Dick had been around sharks before and Raymond hadn't.

I shall never forget the frozen, staring expression on the face of De Lano's guide one morning, when we pulled up to where he was sitting, alone, in the boat. "Where is Mr. De Lano?" I asked. "He, he's over there," pointing to a break in the jetty, "taking a swim." The little hair that I possess assumed an erect posture on top of my head. The water was alive with sharks. But I could not persuade my friend to desist from his ablutions.

That night, while a group of us were sitting on the hotel veranda, the subject was again broached, and there was much argument, pro and con.

De Lano was emphatic. "I have never read an authentic account of a shark biting a man," he declared, "and I intend to bathe off the end of that jetty as long as I'm here." Old Billy Jackson, long, lank, lean and weather-beaten, and a trifle tobacco stained, happened to be passing.

I called to him. "Did you ever hear of a shark biting a man," we asked. "Naw, I never heard of a shark bitin' a man," he replied, "but one et my brother."

The next day, I happened to be passing No. 2 Buoy as De Lano, clad only in his birthday suit, slipped into the water. A moment later, we heard a wild yell, and glancing over my shoulder, I saw Raymond scrambling up the slippery rocks, as fast as a set of closely trimmed toe nails would let him. "I've been bit," he yelled loudly and ungrammatically, as he massaged his right gluteal muscle, in the neighborhood of where his right hip pocket should have been. My boatman grinned, and nodded toward the jetty, alongside of which a big school of kingfish, ten

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thousand strong, rippled the shallow water in search of food.

But we shall never be able to convince Ray De Lano that he was not nipped by a bloodthirsty, man-eating hammer-head.

Aransas Pass, like all other fishing grounds, has its on and off days. I once labored faithfully for thirty hours without getting even a nibble.

But if the atmospheric conditions are at all propitious, some one in the tarpon fleet is almost bound to do business. A young chap from Houston, the partner of my friend, Mr. W. H. Munsell, was the fortunate man in our crowd.

His good luck generally ended with the strike, however, for on his best day he succeeded in boating only two out of nineteen fish. As a rule, I start in strong, and wind up with the boobies. But it is not always the fish you land that gives you the thrill that lasts. One hour before I reeled in my line for the last time on Friday night, I hooked a dainty little five footer, out in the white water, at the end of the north jetty, and he gave me a joyous battle. He would run in on me, despite all I could do, and he jumped as if he had been on a diet of steel springs all his life. Seven times he left the water, twice clearing the surface for six feet or more, and finally, popping up right under the stern of the skiff, threw the hook directly in my face. He certainly was a sporting proposition, and I trust that some day we shall meet again.

In the Panuco, the tarpon bite only in the afternoon, but the big fellows at Aransas appear to be always hungry, and one is liable to get a strike at any time between

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eight and six. Mr. Vance and his friend, the Captain, who have fished the Pass, year after year, for nearly a quarter of a century, consider the late morning hours the best. Fisher Jones, of New York, caught the prize fish of the season of 1923 in the middle of the afternoon. Despite the fact that a giant shark engulfed the seven foot tidbit at two mouthfuls, ten minutes after it had been pulled up to the boat, Jones insists that 3 P. M. is the hour for him.

Business called me home on Saturday, and Dick accompanied me, but Mr. De Lano remained for one more day. He put in the greater part of the morning playing a six foot tarpon on a nine thread line, and a light steel bass casting rod. He insists that time was all he needed, but I fear that if the fish had not decamped with six hundred feet of "Invincible" string, my young friend would be fighting him yet.

The initiation of Raymond is now a matter of history, and next year he will return to his many friends and admirers at Aransas, a skilled and seasoned veteran.

## "SAILS"

THE question is, how would you behave if you were named "Istiophorus Nigricans"? Well, that is the way a sailfish acts. To quote my old friend, Ben Weber, "He is just plumb locoed and ondependable." Tarpon are sufficiently lacking in reliability, but when it comes to real emotional cloudbursts, the sailfish leads them by at least a mile.

The smallest member of the swordfish family, and a warrior of parts, this long-nosed denizen of the deep is geographically distributed in the West Indies and warmer parts of the Atlantic, as far north as Jupiter Light.

It feeds on mullet, small flying fish, and similar kindergarten material, and generally travels in small schools. When swimming near the surface, three or four abreast, the long-nosed, cigar-shaped monsters move rather slowly. And when they cut across the trough of a wave, the sight is one calculated to thrill the nerves of the most hardened angler.

Occasionally, when on parade, they will take a bait, but as a rule they act as if their minds were occupied with far weightier and more important problems, and aside from a slight snobbish elevation of their nasal appendages, they obstinately and serenely continue on their way. I have seen as high as a dozen such aggregations in a single afternoon, all traveling in the same general direction, their fins cutting the water like brownish shingle froes, their goggly eyes fixed and staring, and their appetites apparently troubling them not at all. Delicious and shining strips of king-fish belly, mullet, gold and silver

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spoons, tarporeno lures, all fail to elicit even a passing glance of admiration or desire. On the other hand, some of our most fruitful quests have occurred on days when not a single fish was visible until the hooks had been set.

The best months for sailfishing are December, January and February, although the big fellows haunt the home waters, and not infrequently are captured throughout the year. The favorite territory is that lying between Melbourne, Florida, and Key West, and the gulf stream and the shore line.

For several years I discontinued my Florida winter vacations because of my objections to being imposed upon by the inhabitants. No experienced traveler cares to be compelled to first ask the price of everything he desires to purchase in order to guard against an overcharge. Once, when checking out at a widely advertised fishing camp, I found a strange item of \$17.50 on my bill. Upon inquiry, I found that I had been charged \$2.50 a day for bait! The bait consisted of from three to six small mullet! This cured me, and I gave up in disgust.

Last year, a friend told me of a very capable boatman at West Palm Beach, and assured me that the good old days of provincial piracy were a thing of the past. I listened, and afterward found that he spoke the truth.

In response to my inquiry, a list of guaranteed hotel rates was forwarded to me, and not once during my recent visit was I imposed upon. I found West Palm Beach prices no higher than those of Kansas City. The people wanted, and appreciated our business. The change certainly was a welcome one.

Our guide was Captain P. R. E. Hatton, well known as a popular magazine sport writer, and a salt-water

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angler of note. Member of a representative Maryland family, Captain Hatton spent much of his earlier life on the waters of Chesapeake Bay. Compelled by ill health to lead an active outdoor life, he finally gave up a position at the national capitol, and, purchasing a seaworthy 36-foot cabin boat, put his little family aboard, and cruised down the coast to Palm Beach. Four years of constant activity in Florida waters have made him a master of craft as well as a master fisherman. I have never met a more capable or companionable cicerone.

Generally it is my fortune to take along an unsophisticated amateur, but this time I certainly played safe. My fishing partner was the Honorable Nicholas Hunter, slender, graceful, and debonair, and unquestionably one of the luckiest anglers that ever wet a line. I have never been particularly fortunate at anything, unless it was in selecting Nick for my fishing associate. He has magnetism enough for a whole party, even when the party is as big as I am, so I just try to hang around and snag the ones he misses. Our high mark was reached in the fall of 1922, when, between us, we brought in eighteen tarpon in three hours, and broke up nearly all of the tackle at Aransas Pass. Three years later I was foolish enough to chaperone him on a trip to my pet pike preserve, near Piney Ridge, Minnesota, and he not only caught all of the wall-eyes and nearly all of the bass in that part of the states, but actually left but three pickerel in Crow Wing County. The indignant game warden told him to go back to Missouri and stay there.

Nicholas had never before met a sailfish, but so long as it was a fish, Nick felt at home, and I was positive that Mr. *Istiophorus Nigricans* quickly would feel likewise. We reached Palm Beach Monday afternoon. Cap-

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tain Hatton was expecting us, and while the weather signs were somewhat unpropitious, the good ship Halebam (which reads Mabel A. H. when in reverse) is staunch and seaworthy, and we were ready for anything.

The next morning at 7:30 we cast off, and forty-five minutes later had negotiated the pass, and were riding the whitecaps, out in the open sea. It was too rough for good fishing, in fact a little too rough for comfort. I served my apprenticeship in the navy, however, and it now takes quite a lot of churning to put my liver out of commission. Poor Nick is not so fortunate, and between bites, and while his blood pressure was low, at first he did not have a very hilarious time of it.

The sailfish were a trifle reticent, but their friends, the kingfish and the crevalle and the amber jacks, were not, and gave us plenty of excitement.

At eleven o'clock I persuaded Nicholas to eat a hard boiled egg, in order to give the walls of his stomach something to work on. Apparently his gyroscope was not functioning, for the dainty morsel refused to stay put, and my friend promptly accused me of trying to make him seasick. Talk of gratitude! A couple of hours later, however, he regained his equilibrium. Shortly afterward he hooked his first sailfish, and from that time on forgot that he ever had a stomach.

Captain Hatton prefers to use two small hooks (about 7-0) the upper being threaded through the eye of the lower, and slender, 8-foot piano wire leaders. The leader is replaced with a new one each day. The distal end of the wire is run through the eye of the upper hook from before backward, looped twice around the shank, and again carried back through the eye from before back-

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ward, to be finally twisted around the main wire. When traction is applied, the point of the hook is forced upward and backward, and directly into the jaw of the captive.

If one would become a successful angler for sailfish, one must understand the probable underlying psychological factors. A sailfish does not seize its quarry as a shark or a barracuda does. The swordsman has no real teeth, only a sandpaper-like roughness of the jaws, and a long, file-like bill. It rushes into a school of little fish and viciously thrashes about with its bill. If any are killed, they promptly cease to swim, and drift with the waves. Consequently, the bait must be made to act just as a small fish would act under the circumstances.

When the smashing blow is delivered, few men can resist the impulse to strike, and strike hard. If this is done, the sailfish undoubtedly considers that he has failed to bag his luncheon, and promptly departs for new fields. The angler should troll with a loose line (that is, with the brakes off), allowing the bait to trail about 100 feet behind the boat. A light line, of not more than 12 threads (24 pound test) is best, because it runs most freely. With the drag properly set, and an angler who will leave the thumb pad alone, once the hook is set, a 12-thread line is amply strong for the largest sailfish.

The instant the fish strikes the bait with his bill, the line is released and 40 or 50 feet allowed to run out. A light touch with the thumb holds it in check, and at the same time permits the angler to "feel" for his fish. The second "strike", when the hungry monster actually sucks in the eroded and ragged strip of kingfish belly, is the crucial one, and it is then that the swordsman is hooked. For hours, the angler has been waiting, and praying for



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this moment, and, to even the most sophisticated fisherman, the ensuing thrill is well worth the price. During the past forty years, I have tried them all, and I know. There is a heaving lunge, as the big boy settles back in the breeching, and then out he catapults like a vicious, over-grown musky, in a wild endeavor to throw the hook. Not infrequently, he succeeds. If the hook holds during the first three minutes, it is very probable that it is safely set and that it will be only a question of time and patience until the long-nosed demon is safely on board.

It is when fighting a big fish, or one insecurely hooked, that the skill of the boatman comes into play. A friend and I once chartered a fishing boat at Miami. The "Captain" was a hard-boiled New England Yankee who was so stingy that he spoke only in words of one syllable, and when we snagged a big grouper or a huge barracuda, he would refuse to stop the boat because it wore out the clutch! We had no leather belt rod rests with us, and during that week I fought sea monsters at full speed until my abdomen looked like the surface of a waffle iron. It was months before I fully recovered physically, and I have never gotten over the mental shock.

Since then I have fished with many sailors, but seldom have I met one who could handle a boat as Captain Hatton does. Under his tutelage, I believe that a 10-year-old boy could quickly learn to successfully manage a 600-pound marlin.

In fighting heavy fish, the reel question has always been one of great interest to me. Some of the large reels built for salt water fishing are supplied with wholly inadequate cranks and handles. Think of a lever not much more than an inch long on a double multiplier which car-

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ries 200 or 300 yards of line! Years ago I partially solved this problem by attaching a 9-0 crank to the smaller reels. But sometimes the price of a spare crank is exorbitant (recently one was forwarded to me with a \$6 bill attached!) And the pear-shaped handle is an abomination.

On the present trip, I was much impressed with a reel which was new to me, the "Templar." This accessory, in the larger sizes, is most admirably adapted to fighting such aquatic giants as swordfish, tuna, and large tarpon. The oiling system is both simple and efficient. But the best feature of all is the handle. Four inches or more from tip to tip, fitted with a tension drag which can be adjusted by ounces, even while a fish is in play, and a pair of man-sized, spool-shaped, solid comfort grips, it certainly is a thing of beauty and a joy forever. Personally, I never realized what reel comfort meant until this implement came into my hands.

The afternoon of our last day at Palm Beach arrived only too quickly. A glorious sunset, a frolicsome little breeze which just ruffled the light blue water, the soothing drone of a perfectly adjusted engine, and one hour still to go! What more could any man ask? Nicholas has never been a demonstrative gentleman. In fact, he possesses what is sometimes vulgarly referred to as a "poker face." He spoke of the effect of a sailfish bite on the angler's circulation. I suggested that the ensuing shock must be due to a stimulating influence on the adrenals. And all the time this hard-boiled North Carolina product was surreptitiously flirting with a hungry fish! His bait had dropped back about 35 feet when he felt the big fellow take hold. A vigorous but skillful yank, and the deed was done! "Reel in, reel in!" ad-

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monished Captain Hatton, and as I started to obey, a small cyclone apparently struck my bait, engulfed it, and departed. I struck twice. Out leaped my quarry, the biggest sailfish that I had ever hooked! Three times he broke water, then a long run which sadly diminished the diameter of my already slender spindle. I checked him, however, with a hundred feet yet to spare, and then he sulked.

In the meantime, Nick had been kept busy. His fish, while not so large as mine, appeared to be full of well-tempered steel watch springs. At the end of forty minutes he had it under control, and the skipper grasped it by the bill, and gently pulled it aboard.

Doubles are all too rare in my experience to be played recklessly, however, and a 12-thread line is a thin anchor rope for so great a treasure. Consequently, I played my quarry tenderly and with circumspection. At last I was able to lead him alongside, and Captain Hatton gracefully did the honors. When uninjured, all of the rest of our fish had been released, but these two we kept, and when Fred Parke, the eminent taxidermist, is through with them, for many years to come they will decorate a couple of Kansas City libraries, and serve as mementoes of a certain brief but joyous February vacation on the Florida coast.

## THE PHANTOM GOBBLER

*When the sprigs and the widgeons swing down from the  
North*

*And the flame of the candle burns blue,  
You will hear the broad reaches along the flat beaches  
Insistently calling to you.*

*Kiss the Lady good-bye, with a laugh and a sigh,  
Give all of your troubles a bow.  
The next fortnight at least be a king at the feast,  
For Texas is paradise now.*

—November at Port Aransas.

ALL men crave variety. When we are boys, the prospect of a rabbit hunt fills us with glee; but after we have grown old and blasé, it takes more than three or four cottontails to satisfy us, and we are indeed fortunate if we can indulge our taste for luxury oftener than once in a blue moon.

Occasionally, Fate is kind. Not long ago, some of my colleagues invited me to address the membership of a famous southern medical organization. The meeting was to take place in San Antonio in November.

My old and valued friend, George Foote, oil man and sportsman of Dallas, had on several previous occasions asked me to accompany him on a Kerr County turkey hunt and, when an obliging mutual acquaintance whispered the news of the approaching Texas visit into George's hospitable ear, the result was little short of miraculous. With bucks and gobblers just in the offing, the prospect became rosy and alluring. But a trip to Texas without a few days at Port Aransas is a banquet

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minus champagne. Don Farley, my distinguished young guide at Mustang Island, had already written me that the tarpon were running late, large, and ravenous, and that the ducks and geese were fairly devastating the crops in the vicinity of Aransas Pass. Consequently, the program appeared a simple one—business first, then ten days of sport such as only the Gulf states can offer in November.

The medical convention proved a very happy event, with friends from all over the South in attendance. By the end of the second day, however, when I got ready to depart, I was considerably the worse for wear. The fact that both the railways connecting San Antonio and Corpus Christi had discontinued their Pullman service did not make me any happier, but the bus connections were good, and shortly after midnight I was in bed at Corpus, dreaming of flocks of sprigs and redheads and widgeons.

Port Aransas is only twenty miles away, and I planned an early start the next morning, in order to catch the birds en route to the water holes for their postprandial drink. But the station master overslept, and it was past seven before I succeeded in retrieving my luggage and getting under way for Aransas Pass and the ferry.

At Mustang Island, the shooting is done on the flats from behind laurel blinds over wooden blocks. The water is only sixteen or eighteen inches deep, and one seldom loses a cripple. The guides, who serve as tarpon boatmen throughout the summer and fall, all own motorboats. Trailing a skiff-load of decoys, one leaves the wharf early in the morning and runs several miles to the blind which has been selected for the day. As a rule, the little brown shelter is surrounded by sleeping ducks when the

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sportsman and his cicerone arrive. The launch is anchored a quarter of a mile away, and the skiff is used as a floor for the blind. The decoys are skillfully arranged, the rowboat hidden in the improvised miniature laurel thicket, and in less than thirty minutes one is ready for feathered visitors.

I reached Tarpon Inn at eight and shot my first duck of the season, a drake sprig, an hour later. It was an overcast day, but dry. The birds, sprigs, redheads, widgeons, and bluebills, decoyed well—in fact, at times they nearly knocked our caps off—and long before noon we had our limit. It was too dark for photography, so we gathered up the blocks and ran in for luncheon.

At Tarpon Inn, one always finds a number of old acquaintances. Some of us, as Dr. Waddell of New York, Hoover of Chicago, and Russell and myself from Kansas City, have been regular visitors for more than two decades. Captain Jim Ellis and his wife and their son, Billy, are ideal hosts and one is always counting the minutes between visits. No guest ever loses weight during his stay at Tarpon Inn.

The greatest attraction at Port Aransas is, of course, the tarpon fishing. As a rule, the silver kings are most plentiful in June, but occasionally the fall run affords wonderful sport, and in the past year this was exceptionally so. I have never seen larger or finer fish than were caught at Rockport Bay during the entire month of October. The water was literally alive with them. They could be seen jumping high in the air long before the anglers reached the fishing grounds. In autumn, as in the spring, mullet is the best bait, although I have landed scores on bull shrimp.

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On the present trip, I hooked as many as nine in one afternoon, and this after a fruitful morning in the duck blinds! The silvery giants put up a magnificent battle, and as a rule are promptly released, unharmed.

The deer and turkey season opened on November 16th, and noon of the fifteenth found me at the Blue Bonnet Hotel, Kerrville, awaiting the arrival of George Foote, and his other guests, Jack Goldman, Lob Bullman, and Billy Greenwalt, all of Dallas. Guardian of the party was Holly Wilson, a famous colored cook and campman, and a devout Methodist. Holly's assistant was Barney Johnson, or "Brothah Johnson" to his intimates. Brother Johnson was a city man, and a distinguished Elder, of the Baptist persuasion. When at home he served as Mr. Foote's yard man. This was his first excursion into the wilds, and when Holly wasn't playing practical jokes on him, some of the rest of us were.

Barney was mortally afraid of bobcats. Needless to say, the younger members of the party were constantly finding bobcat tracks at every corner. Billy Greenwalt, who is not only one of the best shots I have ever met but also a born turkey caller to boot, can imitate the wail of a "lion" or a "painter" to perfection, and within twenty-four hours Brother Johnson's nervous system was in such a state that he could hardly sleep.

I had known Holly Wilson by reputation for a long time. He has served Mr. Foote as camp cook for more than a generation. Tall, slender, gray-haired, naturally dignified, courteous and soft-spoken, he is a master in his chosen occupation, and an ardent sportsman, as well. George Foote, the most thoughtful and generous of men, recognizes and appreciates this fine character; and,

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needless to say, on the annual pilgrimages into the wilderness, Holly always gets his share of the shooting.

His favorite and only weapon is an old but well-preserved 12-bore VH Parker, with 32-inch Damascus barrels. It is chambered for large pellets. With an ounce and an eighth of shot in the left barrel and nine buckshot in the right, Holly is ready for anything that flies, runs, or swims. A goodly number of deer and turkey have fallen victim to his unerring aim. But Fate sometimes plays strange tricks on all of us, and Holly was no exception.

On the present expedition, Holly kept referring to a woman whom he called "Ol' Missy" while busy over the bake oven and the frying pans. He would mutter to himself, "Mus' get a gobbler, a big gobbler, for Ol' Missy. Mus' get it." Finally, I asked him who "Ol' Missy" was. "Ol' Missy is my wife," replied Holly, proudly, "And she's the finest woman in all the whole world. She just as interested in these huntin' trips as we all are, and for weeks she's been a helpin' me to get ready." Bless his heart, I was as proud of him as he was of "Ol' Missy." We decided that, come what might, Holly should have the first turkey.

Our camp was on the Sproul ranch, a 6,000-acre tract of rough ground and pasture land, located about twenty-seven miles from the little hamlet of Mountain Home.

About half a mile from our camp and two miles from the main ranch buildings is a tenant house with its accompanying corrals and windmill. The pump is located about two hundred yards from the dwelling, and near it is a tall, open-topped, unpainted storage tank, twenty feet high and twelve in diameter. The hen turkeys are much less timid than their male relatives and frequently



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come to the corral for corn and other tidbits. Both hens and gobblers visit the tank for water once or twice daily, generally at dusk.

Not far from the barn was a large stack of corral poles, roughly thrown together. Holly decided that he would make for himself a little "boma" in this old pile of slender cottonwood logs. The timber did not require much rearrangement, and soon Holly was as snugly nested as the proverbial bug in a rug.

In order to expedite matters, he took a sack half-filled with oats and shelled corn, and liberally baited the fence row which ended near his tidy retreat. Mr. Sproul had told us about a large black gobbler that frequently visited the corral, just at daylight.

Holly walked over from camp late in the evening and skillfully distributed the small grain along the right of way. Very early the next morning, long before any self-respecting gobbler would think of hopping off his perch, Holly and the old Parker were on the job. The rest of us were at our previously arranged posts, on the *qui vive* for whatever Lady Luck might send.

Just as the day was breaking, Holly, straining his eyes as he earnestly gazed through a narrow crack in the logs, experienced a distinct shock. Could that be a real turkey, that huge, dark, ominous-looking mass that was slowly moving down the fence row toward him? Holly's breath came in short, quick gasps. Despite his wide experience and firm resolutions he was trembling like an aspen. Holly suffering from "buck ague"! it was a sight for the gods. Only his strict religious training and his absolute faith kept him from undergoing a hysterical paroxysm, then and there. Apparently the gargantuan fowl was as

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innocent and unsuspecting as a sub-deb at her first party. The gobbler backtrailed, to retrieve a few grains of corn that had previously escaped his attention, and then came directly toward the pole pile.

By this time, Holly had partially regained his composure. The trusty old 12-bore was already trained in the general direction of the quarry. The negro, still breathing heavily, crouched lower, his right forefinger, slightly tremulous, in close proximity to the front trigger. Two feet more, and the summons would sound. Death was in the air. The old Parker never failed. The big gobbler appeared to hesitate, and then—! My God, what was that?

In order to explain the misadventure, we must retrace our steps and follow Holly on his baiting trip the previous evening. Unknown to our doughty hunter, the bait bag leaked. A small rip in the corner of the closed end had resulted disastrously. As Holly left the main trail and started toward the pole pile, he swung the partially filled sack around in front of his chest, and a handful of oats and shelled corn dribbled out, unnoticed. He had leaned his gun against the blind and again shifted the sack. The leakage ceased. He had then strewn the rest of the grain along the fence where the big gobbler would find it, thrown the empty sack over his shoulder, picked up his gun, and returned to camp.

The next morning, as Holly yearningly watched his prospective prize saunter down the tempting pathway toward him, three prim and well-groomed young hens approached the blind from the opposite direction. If our hero had been less absorbed in watching his prospective victim, he could not have failed to observe them. They daintily picked their way right up to the improvised

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boma. The hungry and inquisitive leader, wholly unembarrassed, stuck her head through a chink, right into Holly's lap! With a wild squawk, she tried to jerk it back, got partially caught, and by the time she was free, there wasn't another wild turkey gobbler or hen within a square mile. Poor Holly was at first too shocked and dumbfounded to realize fully the nature of the catastrophe.

But he finally figured it out, as he slowly wended his way back to camp, a sadder and wiser man. "I'm agoin' to git that turkey for Ol' Missy," he declared, "if I have to stay here a whole year." That evening, he again baited "the trap," as he called it, but this time he used a bag with no holes in it.

The second day was damp and foggy. It was six o'clock before Holly reached his blind. The minutes dragged by, but no turkey came. At last, he heard a slight noise, far up to the fence row, near the barn, and a moment later he thought he could discern the outline of His Majesty. But this morning, the old gladiator appeared to be nervous. He stalked about, but not once did he come within shotgun range. Holly's nerves were taut. Then he heard the hinges of the corral gate squeak, and the next instant the clump of the hoofs of the fence rider's horse. This was too much for the old gobbler. He ran a few feet, straight toward the blind, flapped his wings, and a fraction of a second later he was directly over poor Holly's head, and on his way to parts unknown. In the fog, he looked as big as a straw stack. The old Parker boomed once, twice, but without avail. It was a very disconsolate negro, indeed, who crept slowly into camp, that moist and drippy morning. He declared the gobbler was a "hant".

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For two days, Holly refused to hunt at all. But the cravings of old Nimrod are not to be denied, and shortly before daylight on my last day, as Mr. Foote and I were climbing into the car to ride to a distant deer stand, Holly, grinning sheepishly, bobbed up, the faithful old Parker beneath his arm. He slipped into the back seat and we started. "I think I will just go ovah and see if I can't get another poke at that old gobbler," he confessed.

A biscuit's throw from camp, we almost ran into a young buck, accompanied by a doe and a fawn, and a half hour was wasted before we decided that he was too juvenile.

As we swung out into the open country, we caught a glimpse of the windmill and the tall storage tank. The car was stopped, with a jerk. "What's that?" exclaimed Mr. Foote, excitedly. He pointed toward the tank. "Wait!" And he reached for his 7x Hensoldt marine glasses. For a second, he leveled them at the top of the tower and then handed them to me. "The old boy, himself," he chuckled. I steadied the glasses on the edge of the car roof, and slowly turned the focusing screw. Perched on the edge of that unpainted water tank, high up in the air, was the biggest and blackest tom turkey that I had ever seen.

We explained the situation to Holly. "Yes, theh he is, but how we goin' to git to him. I'm askin' you," muttered the pancake artist. The nearest cover was at least a hundred yards from the tank, and—take it from one who was there—that turkey was awake, very much awake.

Finally, George decided on rather severe measures. "Guessing which way he will fly is guessing, pure and

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simple," he said. "But I have a yardstick that I think will reach him." An, from the tonneau of the car, he hauled out his pet deer rifle, a .300 Savage, equipped with a 4-power telescope sight. He leveled his rifle at the big bird. Holly took a peep. "Good Lawd, Mistah Gawge, I can shoot him through the haid from here."

"No, you can't," replied Mr. Foote. "And don't be foolish. Take this rifle, crawl up behind that little live oak tree, and watch your step. Take your time. Shoot with a rest, and don't aim at the body. If you do, you'll blow him up. Better try to 'crease' him!" "Creasing" means to just scrape the neck, near the base, so as to temporarily paralyze the bird or animal.

Holly was all animation. He pulled his cap down over his eyes, and stooping, crawling, finally wriggling, like a gigantic centipede suffering from a severe case of paralysis agitans, he made his way toward his proposed quarry. Slowly the patient negro worked himself along, the scrubby little oak effectually covering his movements. He reached the tree at last, and laboriously sat down to catch his breath before bringing the rifle into position. The gobbler was restless, but not nearly so restless as the audience.

At last, the slender barrel was thrust forward, and rested on a substantial limb. We saw Holly take a long breath and, almost instantly, the rifle barked.

The bronze and black giant spun completely around, and a shower of feathers flew out of his back. He tried to spread his wings, but only partially succeeded. At any rate, the increased surface helped to break the fall, as he spiraled down, to hit the ground with a resounding thump.

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Holly let the rifle slide to the ground, threw off his cap, and the next second appeared to be trying for a speed record. George and I were not far in the rear, but both of us are overweight and Holly steadily gained on us.

For a moment, all three of us lost sight of the gobbler. Then I saw him wobbling unsteadily, but on his feet. He turned around two or three times, as if to get his bearings, and then he, too, began to run. Compared with his footwork, ours was as that of a farm boy compared with Nurmi. He vanished over the brow of the hill in just about seven seconds, flat.

Holly's bullet had indeed creased him, as the detached and torn plumage showed, but, as Ol' Missy's husband plaintively acknowledged, "It creased him jist a mite too high!"

## ONTARIO MUSKIES

**W**HEN it comes to thrills, tiger shooting, from a frail ground boma, probably heads the list, but recently I have experienced an even more delightful one——fighting giant muskies on light tackle.

In hunting big game, the real suspense ends when the trigger is pressed. In muskellunge fishing, the “setting” of the hook is only the beginning of the fun.

Piscatorially, I have tried them all, from the tiny brook trout to Gargantuan swordfish and Tampico tarpon, but I know of no fish more worthy of the angler’s steel than a battle-scarred old Canadian musky. Pound for pound, they are the gamiest fish that swim. To them, fear is an utter stranger. I have had a 4-footer lie perfectly still, like a sunken railway tie, and pay no attention whatever to two excited and panting fishermen who were plying him with every succulent “dainty” in a well-filled steamer-trunk tackle box. We once saw a rusty old 40-pounder feeding in the shallow water of a reedy bay. With motor off, our guide quietly paddled in and out of the stronghold for nearly an hour, while his two ambitious passengers religiously hammered every square yard of the water with baits of every conceivable sort. Not a rise. And then, just as we were about to leave, a choking exclamation from Knute Halverson, a prince of Canadian guides, “My God, look!” Just back of the boat, curiously eyeing the bright metal propeller of the little freeboard motor, languidly came a huge, shovel-nosed bristly toothed old monster, fully 6 inches across the shoulders, and nearly five feet long! Hysterically, we trailed gold and nickel-plated spoons, and numerous

## ONTARIO MUSKIES

other fancy, Christmas tree ornaments of various sorts, directly in front of his chin. We even tried to snag him with a gaff, but he simply dropped back, out of range, and finally departed, as coolly and unhurriedly as he had come.

I have fished a great deal for muskellunge, in Minnesota, where they are extremely scarce; in Wisconsin, where they do not run very large; and in various parts of Ontario and Manitoba.

Four years ago, a small party of us spent our vacation on a canoe trip in and around Rainy Lake. With Billy McDonald as cicerone and guide, we put in a wonderful fortnight, but not a single musky did we encounter.

The next year, Frank Hodges, a noted sportsman, my son, Dick, and I went to Flag Island, on the west coast of Lake of the Woods. Charlie Fernstrom was our host that year, a mighty angler, and a most likeable man.

In 1928, Chancellor E. H. Lindley, of the University of Kansas, Dr. E. L. Bagby, of Supply, Oklahoma, Dick, and I fished out of another Lake of the Woods resort, on the east side of the lake. Dr. Bagby, who had never met a musky, had beginner's luck, and caught two fine ones—a 36 and a 30-pounder—but the rest of us got only mediocre fish. We liked the east side water, however, and decided to try it again another year.

In 1929, Dick and I were in Africa, but early the next year I began to look around for a suitable vacation spot. My son was tied down with hospital duties, but Dr. Lindley loaned me his fine son, Stanley, an instructor in psychology at Yale, for a fishing partner, and promised to join us later, and bring some other friends with him.

It was in April that I first heard of Denis Chabot, who



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has a camp near Emo. Emo is a village located about midway between Fort Frances and Rainy River, and can be reached in twenty hours, without change of cars, from Chicago. I wrote Chabot. Both he and his charming wife are indefatigable anglers themselves. She is the better fisherman of the two, but that does not deter the inimitable Denis. It only spurs him on to greater efforts. One can plainly see that he some day hopes to rival her as a record breaker.

Stanley Lindley and I reached Emo on August 16, and a few hours later were at the camp. We quickly learned that, as usual, the water was heavily covered with "bloom", and that the fish, particularly the larger ones, were shedding their teeth. With me it is ever thus. But Denis had warned me beforehand. The early weeks of July and the later ones of September are the best, and I had come, despite his warning, for August is the only vacation time at my disposal.

Stanley drew Roy Waldenberger for guide, and Mr. Chabot had been so kind as to secure for me Knute Halverson, one of the most skilled and experienced of muskellunge fishermen.

Pickerel were numerous, and frequently ran large, from 12 to 20 pounds, but we were out for musky, and everything else was promptly returned, unharmed, to the water.

Almost from the first, Stanley and Roy encountered large fish, every day. While they were unlucky in landing them, they saw (and felt) at least twenty during our fortnight at Chabot's.

I was not so fortunate. During the entire period I had but five strikes, one of these being from a peppy little 10-pounder.

## ONTARIO MUSKIES

It was very warm, and on the third day Knute and I decided to lay off, from 2 to 6, and fish again after dinner. That evening, in a narrow channel between two rocky islands, and not more than a mile from camp, I got a tremendous strike, on a red and white plug, a musky "pikie" minnow. It was 8 P. M. and almost dark. I set the hooks until my 5-ounce, one-piece Heddon bamboo rod was almost a true arc, and then kept the big fellow under a 15-pound strain when he shot out of the water.

He came up, then down, down, down, the line leaving my reel spool in a series of short, asthmatic jerks against the tightly held thumb. The tension was too much for him, and he again started up, then changed his mind, and endeavored to run under the canoe. But the water was free from vegetation, and Knute handles a canoe as a dancing master handles his feet. A few more swift, erratic runs, and he was ours! The taxidermist who mounted him put his weight at 37 pounds, and he actually did weigh 34.

Early the next morning, in a near-by rush-grown bay, I snagged another beauty, a 30-pounder, and that ended my strikes for a whole week.

On the fourth day, Chancellor Lindley and President L. D. Coffman of the University of Minnesota arrived, and the four of us decided to take a long canoe trip. To an angler, the grass in the field just across the fence always looks a little bit more luxuriant and tempting. As usual we made a mistake. In five days we covered nearly 300 miles of water, and did not catch a single musky. During that same period, our friends at Camp Chabot brought in two big fish, and lost half a dozen more. But we had a wonderful time at Taylor's Point, Miles Bay,

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

Turtle Lake, and Whitefish, and, while we yearned for a record muskellunge, we shall always have fond memories of that canoe and camping trip.

On our return home, we found that the fifth and last member of our party, President Walter E. Jessup, of the University of Iowa, had arrived. Dr. Jessup is not only an eminent university president, but an angler of note, and a mechanical genius as well, and he had brought with him a Tom Thumb tackle box which aroused the envy of every man who saw it. Knute called it the toothpick kit. It would have made an admirable jewel case.

Of all our party, I think Dr. Coffman was the most industrious. Dick, my son, once estimated that a conscientious musky fisherman made 1,100 casts a day. President Coffman bettered the average by at least 50 per cent.

Despite his strenuous and skillful efforts, the big fellows absolutely ignored him, from start to finish. I suspect that they were just a bit peeved that so prominent a Minnesota educator should have come all the way to Canada after a fish.

At various times, on the Lake of the Woods, I have had good results following the use of plain No. 12 spoons, with treble, feathered hooks, or with brown bucktails. Denis Chabot is a great believer in red bucktails, but as he caught only one fish, and that a small and somewhat strabismic 28-pounder, during our entire stay, I fear that he selects the bouquets of scarlet horsehair because they are pretty, and not because they might attract a fish. I noticed that when Mrs. Chabot went out to bring in a big musky, she usually took along one or two Creek Chub minnows.

## ONTARIO MUSKIES

As soon as we discovered that the muskellunge were on a red and white clothespin diet, our two "pikie" plugs of that color were worked overtime. I called mine "Barbara," in honor of a little carrot-topped flapper friend of mine, and she certainly was an industrious young lady.

As soon as Dr. Lindley arrived, I turned Barbara over to him, and a little later, she and her sister, whom we named "Susie", took turns on the ends of the lines of the three distinguished prexies. I should judge that while each of the fishermen in our party traveled about a thousand miles, those two pet baits traversed a distance at least ten times as great. With all this hard safari work, and a multitude of pickerel and musky bites, their beautiful complexions were just about wrecked. But they certainly did prove attractive to the fish! By actual record, we had more than thirty musky strikes on those two plugs, and it was not particularly good musky weather, either.

Stanley was the luckiest of the group when it came to hits; in fact, he ran some four strikes to my one. But apparently the Canadian fresh water monsters were unused to associating with Yale psychologists for, the instant they came up for a breath of air and saw who their caller was, they would promptly spit the bait out, and step on the gas.

Stanley got a 20-pounder, however, a slender and beautiful specimen, and another of 15 pounds, which was gently and promptly released, but the big ones simply refused to stay hitched.

His father, the Chancellor, who is one of the most expert of anglers, also experienced a run of hard luck.

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

Nevertheless, he stayed with the job, ten hours a day, and profited by the sunshine and the exercise.

All too soon our vacation drew to a close, and the last day of August found us once more aboard the Loretto B., this time homeward bound.

In 1931, we hope to again spend a few weeks on that magic island, and right now I will venture to wager that every man in that party brings with him at least half a cord of brightly colored wooden plugs!

## A TARPON RODEO

*Out where the long, lean combers ride,  
With hungry, ragged, foam-flecked lips,  
And the beacon stands, with kindly hands,  
To guide the Channel ships.*

*There we shall find the Silver Kings,  
Leaping, resplendent, in sea and sun,  
Battling their way through the pounding surf,  
With never a pause till the race is run.*

*So pack the old duffel, and oil up your reel,  
And take a good look at your rod,  
We shall spend a few days at the mouth of the Pass,  
With water, and sky, and God.*

**M**Y little wife insists that any man can become a successful big-game hunter if he has a little time, a little money, and a slight lack of intelligence. For an angler, the requirements are greater. One must at least add patience, and the gambling instinct. Fishing is the greatest game of chance in the whole universe. Fortunately, it is a game in which the fisherman invariably wins. Even though his prey eludes him, he can always count on fresh air, a soothing environment, and prospects. Of these, the last comes first. Without prospects it would indeed be tough sledding for even the most optimistic of us.

In the proper season, Port Aransas, Texas, located on Mustang Island, in the Gulf, is one of the greatest fishing resorts in the world. Here one can find anglers from all parts of the country, each and every one of whom is intent upon the pursuit and capture of the finny representative of his choice.

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

Some people confine their attention to mackerel, others declare that the kingfish is the greatest prize of all, a few stick to the luscious and well flavored pompano, or the funny-faced sheepshead, and now and then one encounters an enthusiastic and inveterate hunter of sharks. There is always a plentiful supply of the latter—tiger sharks, sand sharks, agile and full of pep, and huge and vicious hammerheads, as ugly and wicked looking as Satan at his best. Bloodthirsty, and apparently always hungry, they will trail a wounded or captive fish for hours. Out of the water, they are ghastly looking, white-bellied monsters, their semicircular mouths ornamented with a double row of teeth that would be a source of pride to any cannibal king. Even the little ones are ugly. Squirring about on the hook they resemble nothing so much as a vicious young nightmare on its way to be dreamed.

My old and cherished friend, Foote, of Dallas, is a strong advocate of the jewfish and in calm weather, day after day, one may find him and his guide, Clem Mathewson, the king of professional jewfishermen, playing about in a tiny skiff at the end of the North jetty.

Strangest complex of all is that which possesses my eminent brother-angler, Professor J. P. Fruit, of William Jewell College. Dr. Fruit is an ardent fisherman and during his eighty years of life has experimented on practically everything, from minnows to whales. But I really believe he gets the greatest kick out of capturing stingrays, particularly if the whip-tailed member of the family Dasyatidae is firmly attached to the line of his fishing partner.

Of all the fish that frequent the waters of the Gulf ports none has so many admirers as the lordly tarpon,

## A TARPON RODEO

a magnificent and sporting giant that has richly earned the title of "The Silver King." It is for the sake of this splendid prize that a host of fishermen seek the waters of Aransas Pass, year after year, during the Summer season.

Apparently the silvery giants spend the winter in the Carribean and the Southern part of the Gulf—I have caught them in Panama, and at Tampico, in January, February and March—and start their Northern tour, clinging fairly close to shore, in April. June and July are the best months for tarpon fishing at Mustang Island. By September the schools are again on their way south and early in November the season ends. Fortunately, the tarpon is not a good table fish. The flesh is red, tough, and full of bones. At Tampico the Mexican laborers appear glad to take over the catch, however, and one always finds a crowd waiting at the dock.

A friend of mine, who was curious to see how they prepared the fish for food, one day took the trouble to follow his fish. The tarpon was scaled, drawn, and carefully washed. It was then placed on a long, smooth plank, garnished with shrubbery, buttered, and finally baked before an open fire. After the process was completed the well-browned delicacy—which my friend insisted tasted like a baked pincushion—was devoured with relish.

The annual Tarpon Rodeo at Port Aransas is held at some time in June or July and is attended by tarpon enthusiasts from the entire Southwest. The first day reminds one of the opening of the duck season at Reelfoot Lake. Old acquaintanceships are renewed, new friends made, and Tarpon Inn, for several decades the headquarters for all true lovers of this great sport, is packed to the attic.



## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

Early in 1933 four of my friends and I decided that we would hold a tarpon rodeo of our own. The group consisted of President L. D. Coffman, of the University of Minnesota, Chancellor E. H. Lindley, of the University of Kansas, President Walter A. Jessup, of the University of Iowa, Harry McGuire, then editor of *Outdoor Life*, and myself. The Texas newspapers referred to our party as "The Brain Trust," but I feel morally certain that my presence had nothing whatever to do with this very complimentary designation.

Like a bunch of school boys we watched the clock, and July 1, the date set for the gathering of the clan, was indeed a happy day. From Illinois and Minnesota, from Iowa and Kansas they came, to spend a few busy hours in Kansas City, and then hop a thousand miles southward, to the land of our dreams. Mr. McGuire was first to arrive. Fit son of his famous sportsman father, ruddy and brown, and physically fit, he looked like an Olympic star as he strode into the waiting room at the Union Station. He had never before tried for tarpon, but apparently he was ready for anything. His equipment consisted of a brace of beautiful Leonard split bamboo salt-water rods, and a couple of Julius von Hofe star drag reels, all of which proved their worth during the succeeding fortnight.

Dr. Lindley, tall, slender, and dignified, an eminent executive, and a fisherman of parts, was next to report; and a couple of hours later Dr. Coffman, swarthy, keen, alert, and as agile as an acrobat, and his handsome associate, Dr. Jessup, arrived.

President Jessup is not only a psychologist of note, but an expert mechanic and engineer, as well. At

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Battle Lake, Minnesota, where he usually spends his summers, he has unanimously been elected outboard motor expert, and owners of diseased and decrepit gas engines of all sorts constantly besiege him for aid and advice. He is one of those rare individuals who never fails. If he cannot get the machine to function he speedily talks the owner into becoming interested in something else. As a result, the depression has not affected his consultation practice in the least.

My good friend, Bruce Morton, Division Passenger Agent of the famous "Katy" lines, had made all transportation arrangements for us, and with his aid, and a telegraphic blessing from his chief, M. G. Cahill, Chairman of the Board and President of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas, we soon were happily on our way.

Twenty-five hours later we reached San Antonio. Here we were met by Dr. Earl Crutchfield, dean of the dermatological faculty of the South, and a noted sportsman. Dr. Crutchfield insisted that he be permitted to carry us to Aransas Pass. Inasmuch as the day was a hot one, and the distance more than 150 miles, I endeavored to dissuade him, but he obstinately refused to listen, and as he drives as well as he talks, and his big Lincoln car looked very inviting, we did not put up too much of an argument. We chartered a sea-going taxicab, with a Mexican driver, to transport the luggage, and started for the Pass. The ride was a most delightful one. The country is beautiful, and the roads excellent. We reached the charming village of Aransas Pass about 11 p. m. Our Mexican and the luggage had preceded us by almost an hour, but careful search and repeated inquiries failed to locate the taxicab in Aransas Pass. Finally

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

Dr. Crutchfield insisted that all of us go to bed at the hotel while he back-trailed, in search of our belongings. The Mexican was finally located, sound asleep on the front seat of his wagon at Beeville, ninety-four miles away! He said that he had decided to lay up for the night, and deliver the luggage on the following morning. Inasmuch as he was carrying all of our tackle, together with two valuable University addresses belonging to President Coffman, all of us felt much relieved when Dr. Earl came dragging him into camp.

An early breakfast at Aransas Pass, a quick trip over the viaduct, and our chosen Eden at last! The water was in excellent condition. Captain and Mrs. Ellis and their tall and erudite son, Billy, had everything ready for us at Tarpon Inn; Don Farley, my personal boatman for many years, Chick Roberts, a veteran of the Pass, and another guide were waiting; and, best of all, our dear friend, Dr. J. P. Fruit, was on the porch to welcome us.

Quickly shifting into suitable garb, and assembling our tackle, we were ready for serious business when the luncheon bell sounded.

Mrs. Ellis feels that an honest workman is worthy of his hire, and, being a lady of high intellectual attainments, and a native of Tennessee, she appreciates fishermen. Consequently, the visitor who does not acquire weight during his stay at Tarpon Inn must deliberately, and with malice aforethought, keep away from the dining room.

The first afternoon we decided that Dr. Lindley and Dr. Fruit should fish together, Dr. Coffman and

## A TARPON RODEO

Dr. Jessup be partners, and Mr. McGuire and I try our luck from Don's launch.

Tarpon tackle is of three classes. Heavy outfits consist of a 20 to 30-ounce rod of split bamboo or hickory, and a linen line of from eighteen to thirty-six strands. The breaking strength is two pounds to the strand.

Light, or 6-9 tackle, which is very popular at Port Aransas, consists of a 6-ounce tip, and a 9-thread, 18-pound test linen line.

Tackle of the 3-6 class is for experts only, and even such skilled fishermen as Hayes, of San Antonio, sometimes fail to deliver on these spider outfits. A 6-thread line has a breaking strength of 12 pounds, and in playing a big fish casualties are common. At various times I have landed three tarpon on broom-straw equipment of this sort, but it is no fun. The suspense is too great. I have also tried to land a fish on "sewing thread" line—meanwhile spending much time in silent prayer, and fervently hoping that the Lord would send me a little one—but I have never yet succeeded in setting the hook sufficiently to keep my quarry on the fragile towline.

Mr. McGuire decided to try heavy tackle first and from the expression on his face, as he reeled in his line, I foresaw serious trouble for the first nickel plated whale that engaged him in battle.

Out through the shining water of the Pass shot our little boat. As a rule, in Summer, the territory lying immediately outside the South Jetty is the best, owing to the fact that the fish are traveling northward. On that day the waves were too high, however, and we

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circled the tip of the North Jetty, and slowed down the engine as our craft entered quiet water. Don adjusted the mullet baits—silver sides are best, but are difficult to procure in Summer—we settled ourselves comfortably in our cushioned chairs, and awaited results. We did not have to wait long. Dr. Lindley insists that the proper way to fish is to just sit, and let the sun shine. President Coffman feels that a true disciple of old Izaak should dispense entirely with footgear in order that he may wiggle his toes in the fresh air. Unfortunately, owing to his eminent position in the educational world, it is impracticable for Dr. Coffman himself to practice this, but anyone who has ever fished with him will agree with me that the temptation is almost too great for even a strong man like the President to resist.

Mr. McGuire and I were calmly discussing the probable results of a moose hunt which we have planned to make with Ernie Calvert, of Rainy River, that Fall, when I felt a tremendous tug at my bait. A swift yank, and the fish was on. I was trolling with a short line, and a second later, as Mr. McGuire described it, the whole bottom of the Gulf appeared to spout upward. My prize, a long, chunky fish, a platinum blonde of pronounced type, promptly took to the air. Once, twice, it leaped, covering ten feet or more at each jump. Fortunately the line held, and the dainty, 6-ounce Murphy rod took up the slack without a quiver, and in less than half a minute the battle was on. The fish was too heavy and obese, however, to put up a prolonged fight, and in twenty minutes it was alongside the boat and Don had painlessly gaffed and released it.

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Within less than an hour, Mr. McGuire hooked one. Apparently his fish had been on a diet, for it was as long and lean as a popular movie actor, and the fight that it put up was a caution. At first my doughty editorial friend tried to be calm and matter of fact, but at the end of fifteen minutes he was bubbling over with enthusiasm. Through it all he kept his head, and not a foot of slack line did that poor fish ever get. Finally, the battle over, Mr. McGuire insisted upon releasing the tarpon. He wanted one that was "over six feet." Inasmuch as six footers are rare at Port Aransas (in the Panuco, at Tampico, they are common, but soft) I demurred, but release it he did.

After that, strikes were staggered along, throughout the afternoon. At supper time my fishing partner was several tarpon in the lead, but as the majority of his fish were of the female persuasion, I laid his success to increased sex appeal rather than angling skill.

Chancellor Lindley, fishing with Dr. Fruit in Chick's boat, had had a barren half day of it. His luck generally runs that way. It is not until the morning of the second day that he really gets into action. One year ago he hooked and landed a big tarpon near the end of the South Jetty exactly at 7:30 every morning on four consecutive days. His early training on Indiana pan fish certainly was not lost.

Dr. Coffman and Dr. Jessup worked hard and scored frequently, but occasionally a fish got away. One day they caught a boat load of huge kingfish. A brilliant writer on the staff of the Corpus Christie Caller published in "The Crow's Nest" an account of a dream he had regarding our three university presidents.

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

"Last night we partook of a delicious shrimp salad, a goose liver sandwich and a bottle of Boo-hoo beer and went to bed. We dreamed we were a wraith and that we were hovering over a small boat in which three university presidents fished for tarpon. We listened shamelessly to their conversation. (Wraiths have no social inhibitions.) And this, as we remember it, was part of what we heard:

First President: This, gentlemen, it appears to me is an ideal day and an ideal setting for our piscatorial adventure.

Second President: Quite so, my dear doctor. I was just thinking that I have seldom seen a sea of a more divine and cerulean hue. Fishing amid such surroundings as these is indeed not only restful but inspiring.

Third President: I, too, am deeply pleased with it, gentlemen. I find that here I am able completely to relax. The problems that yesterday vexed my mind I find here assume proportions of absolute insignificance. Under the spell of the majesty of sea and sky they seem utterly inconsequential. I find it all very restful.

First President: No doubt therein lies the secret of the calm which so many of the pastoral philosophers were able to attain, my dear doctor. In such environment as this one finds no petty annoyances to disturb the flow of calm and calculated reason. Judgment is not warped and there is an emancipation of the spirit which is difficult of attainment when walls hem in the imagination.

Second President: True, true, my dear doctor. Fishing itself has always been the sport of the true philoso-

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pher. None exemplified that better than the gentle Izaak Walton.

Third President: Poetic philosophers, too, gentlemen, can only find true expression in such circumstances. Do you recall those matchless lines of Theocritus—

First President: Pardon the interruption, doctor. But unless my eyes deceive me there appears to be one of the finny denizens of the deep at this moment following close upon us. There, do you see that ripple on the water?

Second President: Indeed, yes, my dear doctor, I do indeed see it. Look closely, I think that one may detect the dorsal fin as it emerges—

Third President: Careful, gentlemen, careful! I do believe I detect something pulling craftily at my line. There, I was sure of it—OH—

(The reel sings and a six-foot fish leaps high in the air.)

First President: Well, upon my word—

Second President: Pull quickly, doctor, pull quickly!

Third President: (pulling vigorously) Yes, yes. I—look out! (The reel sings and the fish leaps again.)

First President: Amazing! Do you suppose, my dear doctor—

Third President: Gimme a little more room, will you!

Second President: (As fish leaps again) Hold him, doctor, hold him! I do believe—

First President: Whoop-e! Watch him go. Reel, doc, reel faster!



## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

Third President: (Panting slightly) Get back and gimme room!

Second President: Ain't he a beauty! Look at 'im! LOOK at 'im!

First President: Reel faster, doc. Reel faster. Do you need any help—

Third President: No, no! Just gimme room.

Second Professor: Hot dog! Watch that baby jump. WATCH HIM JUMP! Here, let me help—

Third President: No, No, NO! Get outta my way and gimme room!

First President: Ride 'im cowboy! Whoop-e-e-e! Watch out for that rod! Here, doc, you better let me—

Third President: HELL NO! GET OUTTA MY WAY AND GIMME ROOM!

First and Second President: LOOK OUT! LOOK OUT!

(The frantic fish makes a rush toward the boat, leaps high and shakes the hook from his mouth. Dead silence in the boat for one long second.)

All three Presidents: DAMN!!!

And then we woke up. Aren't dreams silly?"

On the afternoon of July 4 Chancellor Lindley, fishing with me in Don's boat, hooked and landed three big fish, all on light tackle.

Wednesday noon, when we went in to luncheon, we found Sheriff Cox, of Nueces County, and his deputy, Captain Wright, formerly of the Texas Rangers, who had been sent over to Mustang Island by the Government Weather Bureau to warn us of an

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approaching hurricane. I have seen a few tropical storms in my time, and I long ago lost all interest in them, consequently the three presidents and I promptly decided to move over to the mainland for a day or two. Practically the entire population of Mustang Island seconded the motion, and by 7 o'clock that evening Mr. McGuire, Dr. Fruit, and Billy Ellis were the only people left at Tarpon Inn.

## FLY FISHING FOR TARPON

**T**O A GENUINE tarpon enthusiast, and every follower of the "Silver King" is an enthusiast, the search for lighter and more sporting equipment than that which we now use would seem like an effort at gilding the lily. But as one passes from heavy rods and 18 and 15 thread line to "6-9" paraphernalia, and from that to the charming and dainty "3-6" outfit, the ever-hungry seeker for thrills may draw on a rich and fertile imagination, and wonder, "How would it feel to play one of the nickel plated old warriors on a fly rod?"

More than two years ago, my friend, Henry U. Birdseye, of Miami, a master fisherman, wrote me of his experiences along this line, and ever since then I have been yearning to try my luck in similar fashion.

It was not until February, 1932, however, that I had an opportunity to do so. Out here in the Middle West the winters are cold and disagreeable, and for many years I have made it a habit to tuck my wife under my arm, about February or March, and tote her off to a warmer climate. As a rule, we go after sailfish, but of late, it seems to me that these iridescent beauties are becoming scarcer and scarcer, even on their favorite Florida feeding grounds; consequently this year we decided to seek greener pastures, and as we wished to procure, if possible, both swordfish and tarpon, we chose Panama.

New Orleans is a charming seaport, and a day spent there with my eminent colleague, Dr. Ralph Hopkins, of Tulane University, and his lovely family,

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more than compensates for the long and irksome railway journey. With the Crescent City as a base, the United Fruit Company sends out a fleet of beautiful white steamers along divers routes—to Cuba, Mexico, British and Spanish Honduras, Panama, Guatamala, and half a dozen other minor principalities. The service is good, the accommodations excellent, and the cost almost infinitesimal.

On our southward voyage, we were so fortunate as to have as a fellow passenger Mrs. Elizabeth Alexander, Balboa Heights, Panama City. Mrs. Alexander's husband, the late B. B. Alexander, a distinguished engineer, had been a devoted angler. Her brother-in-law, L. I. Wardlaw of Cristobal, is a pioneer member of the Panama Tarpon Club. In consequence, the friendship of this brilliant young Southern widow opened to us the doors of the oldest and most famous angling organizations in Central America. I shall always feel grateful to her, for a finer, cleaner bunch of sportsmen I have never met, and we found them as hospitable and generous as they were skilled and capable.

A day at the Hotel Washington, the delightful government caravansary at Colon, to orientate ourselves, and we were ready to go!

The Tarpon Club is located on the Chagres River, and just below the giant Gatun dam, near the spillway. The fresh water from Gatun Lake rushes through the gates, and spreads out into a broad, swift stream, about 100 yards wide. An eighth of a mile below the dam there is an abrupt drop of several feet, and then the swift flowing river tempestuously joins an arm of Mother Ocean which stretches out to meet it. Above

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

the falls the river bottom is smooth. The depth varies, of course, with the amount of water which is coming through the sluices. In February and March it is about knee deep.

The fishing is done in the foaming rough water, immediately below the falls. The anglers, wearing heavily metal-calked shoes, cast as far downstream as possible, and then allow their lures to be bounced and tossed about by the white and foaming breakers. The fish, tarpon and snook for the most part, come up to feed in the rushing, foam flecked water, and experience has shown that often they prefer an artificial fly to almost any other sort of bait.

Gatun Lake is a magnificent body of fresh water. The environment and the climate are ideal. If properly stocked and cared for, this lake would, in my opinion, become one of the outstanding fishing resorts of the world.

The Tarpon Club was established almost twenty years ago, and a roster of the original members includes such names as those of Wm. ("Bill") Markham, L. E. Riley, C. H. Blair, Frank Hayes, E. H. Van Stittert, J. J. Walsh, S. B. Heald, Admiral Hugh Rodman, Robert Withrow, C. E. Landers, and P. R. Joyce. Some of these men have fished at the Spillway weekly or oftener for more than two decades. Bill Markham credits Mr. Cooke Daniels of Denver with the first successful use of the fly at Gatun, and Mr. Markham caught, and landed, a tarpon on a Daniels fly, made of white egret feathers, in 1909. Afterward, Markham experimented with a large number of similar artificial baits. I cannot do better than quote this eminent authority:

## FLY FISHING FOR TARPON

"Suppose we start in and make the ideal tarpon fly for this locality. Take a No. 6 hook, place the point between the jaws of a vice and sandpaper or file the coating or enamel from the hook. This gives it a rough surface and will cause your thread to stick. Take dark brown hackle feathers from a rooster—feathers containing black spots are preferable—strip off the down or the fine feathers toward the butt, making a slipping noose around the hook near the bend. Place one of these short feathers near the top, and apply two or three wraps of red silk thread, then place a hackle feather right over the first one, two or three more wraps. Take the thread in your left hand and with your right hand take the tip of the second feather and wind it round and round the hook. Now part these feathers, bring your thread through, wind several times around the hook and fasten. You now have a tail feather and the bristles of the other feather stand at right angles to the shank of the hook. Apply another slip noose, one-half inch from the eye, take perhaps a dozen hackle feathers, place them between your thumb and two forefingers, then lay on top of the hook and bind them tightly with your thread; then bring your thread under the feathers. This raises them up. Now run your thread down through each side of your fly, under the feathers. Take another feather, fasten with your thread, wrap around as you did for the tail, bind it, take several wraps near the eye, and tie. A drop of shellac on each one of these wrappings will protect your thread. Now you have a fly that is different from any fly that you have ever seen. This is my own make and design.

"Now we will put a little life into it. We go down

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

to the spillway at daybreak, the ideal time to fish. We stand just a moment and look around. There is something about the place that grips you, whether it is the wild jungle life, the rushing water over the apron, or whether it is the danger that lurks there on the slippery rocks and concrete. You will notice the big, clumsy pelican, the graceful egrets, the white and blue heron, and a score of other tropical birds, all coming to the spillway to feed. If it should happen to be cloudy, or there should be a thunder storm in the distance, you will hear the hideous howl of the large black monkey, and you may imagine that it is in a tree over your head. But it is not, it is miles away in the jungle. You will also observe the alligators crawling out upon their favorite rocks for another sunshine and sleep, after an all night hunt in search of food. In front of you and down in the lagoon, you will notice numerous tarpon, rolling. A person wonders why they do that, but when you observe them closely you will note they come just far enough out of water to get a little air.

"Now we will start to play out the line along the shore. We have our eye on a small pocket which we have reason to believe contains a tarpon waiting there for something to come over the apron. After letting out the proper length of line, we make the cast toward this pocket. Right here is where the process differs from other fly fishing. You have no loose line wrapped around your feet, your wrist, or the handle of the reel. The line runs directly from your reel through your telescopic rod to the fly; you have your rod gripped with your right hand—always with your thumb on the brake pad, and always with the rod held at an angle. Now your fly goes

## FLY FISHING FOR TARPON

through the air, lands in this little pocket just ahead of of the tarpon, and apparently starts to swim off—this is where we put the life into it. The instant the fly hits the water, a slight movement of the wrist moves the fly perhaps 8 or 10 inches. When it starts to move, the hackle feathers contract, then you hesitate and the spring in the feathers causes them to expand to their original position. This is kept up until the end of your cast. The fly usually travels at a depth of 3 or 4 inches beneath the surface, and not on top of the water. We will say that this particular pocket contains a tarpon 50 inches long, which would weigh 55 pounds or more. When they strike, they hit with a force of a locomotive. This is the reason you must have no slack line to kink up or become tangled, and it is also the reason why your rod should be on an angle. The strike gets the spring of the rod and by that time your reel is moving. If your line and rod were straight this tarpon would snap a twenty-four-thread line as easily as a person could break an ordinary sewing thread. This is one of the beauties of fly fishing, one of the greatest thrills a sportsman can get. You have worked out with your own hands this fly, and during the process of making it you have wondered just what the first stroke would be. You have fooled the tarpon, and now it is up to the tarpon to fool you."

The rods commonly used are Bristol telescoping fly rods, 10 or 12 feet long, with supplementary "bait" handles. A 9-thread linen line is to be preferred.

We reached Cristobal on Thursday morning. Early the next day, Mrs. Alexander and her friend, Robert Withrow, an angler of note, picked us up at the hotel, and an hour later I was trying to find a pair of spiked shoes at the club big enough to fit me. The day was a glorious



## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

one. Apparently the tarpon were not very hungry—it was 10:30 before Mr. Withrow hooked one—but the snook, which resemble large sand pike, and are full of pep and dynamite, were right on the job, and they certainly kept us busy.

At first the newcomer has a rather precarious and insecure feeling, wading about in the swift water, for if your foot slips, it is just too bad. Without long, sharp calks it would be extremely dangerous, and the records indicate that more than a score of improperly shod men have lost their lives at Gatun. As a rule, the bodies are not recovered. During all of these years, however, not a single member of the Tarpon Club has been drowned.

Once a tarpon is hooked, the angler must work it out near the bank, and fight it from one shore or the other, below the falls. This sounds easy, but sometimes proves a hair-raising experience. Under any circumstances, the onlookers seldom fail to get a kick out of it. Just as at Port Aransas and other famous tarpon grounds, the successful angler never lacks for advice and encouragement, such as it is.

But I can assure you that a man who hooks and lands a 5 or 6 foot fish, on a long and limber fly rod, at the Gatun spillway realizes that he has accomplished something!

It was while we were guests at the club that we met Mr. Jack Walsh, a Zone pioneer, at present holding the very responsible position of Supervisor of Dams and Spillways. He and I discovered that we had a number of mutual friends and acquaintances, and one afternoon he took us on a long inspection trip aboard his gasoline "scooter", or private car.

## FLY FISHING FOR TARPON

It was the first time I had visited the Canal Zone since 1903, when, as a young surgeon in the Navy, I had done field work with the Marines under Major, later Major General and Commandant, John A. Lejeune. Needless to say, the changes were impressive and startling.

Mr. Walsh introduced us to his little menagerie, animals picked up at various times by his assistants and helpers. We saw tapirs and baboons, ocelots, and kinkajous. Later, through his kindness and that of Mr. George E. R. Duer, the famous golfer, I was enabled to secure a fine young tapir, "Senorita Pig Iron", and a number of other interesting specimens for the Kansas City Zoo.

The fishing on the Pacific side, around Pearl Island, and in the Bay of Panama, is promising, but difficult of access. Jimmie Dean, of the Buckhorn Cafe, Panama City, is not only Dean in name but Dean in fact, for it is to him that all visiting disciples are referred for advice and sustenance. He has a large number of the finest mounted examples of sailfish and marlin that I have ever seen. Inquirers will find Jimmie both courteous and dependable.

In order to secure good fishing on the Pacific side, one should have a large motor boat, and plenty of time. The best territory is at least a hundred miles, or even more, from the old city.

On our way back to the United States, our ship, the *Cartogas*, stopped at Tela, Spanish Honduras, for a day, to take on a load of bananas. Through the courtesy of Mr. Beasley of the United Fruit Company, one of my friends, Dr. Elijah S. Jones, of Hammond, Indiana, and I secured a launch, and spent a half day trolling over the reefs. Sailfish are frequently captured here.

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But our bait was of indifferent quality, and our time was short. Nevertheless we had some wonderfully good fishing, and I succeeded in astonishing my handsome surgical friend by showing him what could be done with a tiny "3-6" rig. The little bamboo rod, an L. G. Murphy masterpiece, proved more than a match for some of the huge and stubborn calico-colored groupers and other denizens of that part of the Caribbean.

Dr. Roy Bartlett Nutter, and his associates, Dr. Whitaker, of the local hospital, assured us that at Belize, British Honduras, a hundred miles to the North, some of the best sea fishing in the world is to be found, and next January, D. V., I shall see what those waters hold for me.

## TEXAS REDHEADS

**O**F all the members of the duck family, the handsome redhead is the most gregarious and convivial. In fact, one might say, affectionate. When a good flight is on, I have seen a love-sick old drake snuggle up alongside the skilfully decorated cedar effigy of a redhead flapper in a way that was little short of scandalous.

The sight of a "bed" of a thousand or more plump specimens of the *Aythya Americana* aristocracy, is one calculated to seriously impair the arterial efficiency of a far stronger and more athletic individual than I can ever hope to be. Up in northwest Missouri, where I was born and raised, a dozen wild ducks was considered quite a flock, and, starting at this late day, it is extremely improbable that I shall ever become accustomed to such blackbird-like congregations as one finds in many places in the southern part of Texas.

My old and valued friend, Judge Leonard Waddell, had often told me of the thrills of late seasonal shooting on the Gulf, and Don Farley, my boatman of Mustang Island, had assured me that the birds were so numerous and so plentiful that even a fair shot could easily collect his daily toll with a .410 bore; but young folks often are guilty of exaggeration, and it was not until I discussed the matter with Captain Jim Ellis, of Port Aransas, that I was actually convinced.

Captain Jim is a Mississippian by birth, and a sportsman by occupation. When he is not fishing or shooting, he is thinking about one or the other, or both. He is an angler of note, and much of the little knowledge I possess of deep sea fishing I owe to him. Duck shooting is his

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

favorite recreation, however, and I suspect that during the past forty years he has killed enough shovel-nosed fowl to feed the entire drought-stricken population of Arkansas for several months. As the result of either a well-disciplined and religious boyhood or three decades of association with his truth-loving and God-fearing Tennessee helpmate, Captain Jim is one of the most meticulously honest men that I have ever met. One might think this hyperconscientiousness would seriously hamper his career as a hunter and fisherman, but in reality it only adds luster to his crown. I have never known the doughty old frontiersman to exaggerate, even when discussing so entertaining and invigorating a subject as the Texas climate. And that is a big order, for Captain Jim is a most loyal and devoted adopted son. Consequently, when he assured me last October that if I returned to Port Aransas in January he would guarantee me all the ducks that any reasonable man might wish, I immediately marked up my calendar so there would be no forgetting the time. We hunters of the Middle West got but little duck shooting in the fall of 1930, and when the New Year arrived I found myself counting the minutes until I should start south. At last the eventful hour arrived, and tucking my dear little wife under my arm I climbed aboard the Katy Special, bound for San Antonio. Corpus Christi lies but a night away, and early on the second morning we motored over to Aransas Pass, to catch the ferry which runs out to the Port. Don was ready with his motor boat, and a trailing skiff, a hundred well groomed cedar decoys, and several loose blinds. Practically all of the shooting on the Texas Coast is from laurel blinds, constructed around flat bottomed skiffs.

The favorite duck grounds are the shallow flats, where

## TEXAS REDHEADS

the birds can feed, loaf, and sleep at night. When one of these "beds" or congregations of ducks is disturbed, the birds fly away, but afterward they return in small groups or flocks, and a skillfully displayed assortment of decoys will often bring them in. Needless to say, the majority of the feathered beauties are quite sophisticated, and a well constructed blind is a necessity. A few geese frequent Padre Island, to the north, but we were in search of only the smaller brethren. The laurel, from which the blinds are constructed, is cut on the mainland, and brought over to Port Aransas on the ferry. Two bundles, costing \$3.00 each, supply ample building material for one blind.

Don Farley, who has been my tarpon boatman for many years, is a graduate pupil of Godfrey Roberts, one of the best and most experienced duck hunters on the Gulf. As soon as the birds begin to come South in September, the guides mark down their favorite airways, and soon the shallow waters below are spotted with newly constructed blinds. By the time the season opens, November 1, the ducks have become so used to the presence of the hiding places that they pay little attention to them.

Owing to the nature of the environment, and the marvelous Texas climate, the shooting is both comfortable and easy. Having secured my early training in Reelfoot mud, to me the clean and sandy flats seemed little short of Paradise.

We would leave Tarpon Inn (a most excellent hotel) about 6:30, and run out to the previously selected ground in about an hour. If a blind was not already in place, we would take one with us in the skiff which we towed behind our little gasoline cruiser. The launch was anchored several hundred yards from the blind, and the skiff was rowed and dragged into the laurel thicket. A few min-

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utes to adjust the leafy walls of the thicket, a quarter of an hour to unpack and properly distribute the hundred or more cedar decoys, and we were "set" for the balance of the day.

Sometimes the tide proved a bit variable and erratic, and once, at nightfall, Don and I were incontinently stranded, far out on the north Corpus Christi Flats, in less than an inch of water! Fortunately, in some respects Dame Nature has been kind to me. She short-changed me on hair, but she was more than generous in the matter of avoirdupois—the only athletic prize I ever won was as a member of a tug-of-war team—and when I threw my 240 pounds of muscle and adipose tissue into the harness, that little skiff shot through the mud like an Ozark catfish!

Often the ducks begin to return before all of the decoys are in place, and throughout the day they straggle back, by twos and threes and tens and twelves. If the sky be overcast, and the wind blowing, good shooting is the rule until the limit is reached. After that, it is almost as enjoyable to remain quietly hidden and watch the birds come in. Many, and particularly those of the redhead variety, will come in, almost knocking one's hat off, and alight among the blocks.

Labradores seldom decoy at all, bluebills have a habit of swishing by as if they had a 200-horsepower motor attached to their tails, and sprigs are canny birds. Usually, the sprigs swing over the decoys once or twice, then alight on the water just out of range. When they do this, it is always well to frighten them away, for they seldom approach within gunshot later, and their presence will attract lonely and inquisitive newcomers. As a result, the first thing the hunter knows, he will have several hun-

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dred ducks of various kinds enjoying themselves about a hundred yards from his little boma.

The best way to scare them off is by means of a .22-caliber rifle, shooting long rifle cartridges. These comparatively heavy bullets make plenty of noise when they hit the water and ricochet, and even a cheap little rifle will carry a bullet an extraordinarily long distance. It is dangerous to use large caliber rifles in so level a country. An inexpensive single-shot .22 will easily last two or three seasons. Salt water and salt air are not good for guns. At night, the best plan is to follow the example of my friend, L. D. H. Russell, and immediately after reaching the hotel, give your gun a thorough bath under the hot water shower. Afterward the weapon must be dried, and well oiled.

In frightening away curious and wary feathered visitors, one should first make sure that there are none sitting within immediate range. Once, at North Pass, Don had gone ashore to see if he could not stir up a few loafers on the far side of the little peninsula, and had taken with him the rifle and his 20 guage Winchester. I was alone in the blind. Five saucy sprigs circled me out of range, and finally alighted on the water, 70 yards away. I waited awhile, but when they evinced no intention of scraping an acquaintance with my flock of wooden-headed pets, I fired one barrel to frighten them, and the other, hoping to wing one, as they arose. Apparently, I failed to touch a feather, but at the roar of the gun, two overweight and very badly frightened redheads that had sneaked in almost beneath my skiff, awkwardly but hastily departed, to my astonishment and chagrin. For once in my life, I wished for a repeater.

Dick, my son, and I have always shot double guns.



## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

Example and early training probably have much to do with it, but now, with the increasing scarcity of game, I am more firmly convinced than ever that guns firing only two cartridges, and low bag limits, are essential. I believe a ten-bird limit to be ample. Some critic may say, "It is easy for him to plead for a ten-bird limit. He can go where he wishes, and shoot where he will." In reply, I can only say that I put in fourteen hours of work a day throughout October, November and December, and that I had not even shot at a duck for two years before taking the trip here described. But the exercise of a little thought, and common sense, will convince anyone that if we waste the game we now have, it will not be long until there is no shooting for either the rich or the poor, a very undesirable condition. Ever since boyhood, I have been a lover of guns. Even now, in my old age, I still get a great kick out of a newly acquired weapon. When the shooting season approaches, I frequent the gun room more and more, and almost invariably I wind up by selecting the same two fowling pieces, a 20 bore Sauer, built for me many years ago by this famous factory, and a 12 guage, straight gripped Purdey, which I consider the best of the English guns. As time goes on, I use the smaller and lighter gun more and more, possibly because of its weight, which is just 6 pounds, and of its less heavy ammunition, but more probably because I can handle and point it better, and make more and cleaner kills with it. At Aransas, one seldom loses a wounded duck, for the water overlying the flats is shallow, and can easily be waded for hundreds of yards. There is no heavy grass and other vegetation, such as one finds at Reelfoot Lake, and in the Middle West. Nevertheless there is a joy in a

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well and cleanly killed double, and the memory of it persists for a long, long time.

One memorable afternoon we brought to bag nearly a score of beautifully marked sprigs and widgeons on Light House Slew, within sight of the harbor. Another happy day was passed on Murray Reef. We visited the Corpus Christi Flats, and the old Terminal, and our last morning was profitably spent at North Pass, not far from Mud Island.

Many months have slipped by since I last heard Captain Jim's stentorian and insistent morning call of "Six o'clock!" and, half an hour later, Don's cheerful assurance that "We're a goin' to romp on 'em to-day, Doc," and I am again counting the minutes until, gun case in hand, I clamber aboard the Texas Special.

## MEET MISTER RICHARDSON

**A** European hunter, long resident in India, has an infallible prescription for tiger hunting. The ingredients are patience, a bait, and a rifle. I have an even better one for muskellunge—patience, a bait, and a few acres of water in Miles Bay, Lake of the Woods.

In the last 20 years, I have made nearly a score of pilgrimages to this Mecca of all good fresh-water anglers, and hope to make many more. Lake of the Woods is a huge body of water, roughly measuring 80 by 100 miles, in southern Ontario. It is comparatively easy to reach and fairly teems with fish of many sorts. I have never known finer waters for bass. Wall-eyes and pickerel abound and it is here that the mighty muskellunge is to be seen at his doughtiest and best. Time and again, record muskies have been taken from Sabaskong and Miles Bays, near the eastern side of the big lake.

The season is not a long one, lasting only from July 1 to October 15, but during those months the water is clear and cool, the climate ideal, and the scenery charming and picturesque—everything, in other words, that a muskie fisherman could wish.

In my opinion, the muskellunge is one of the most intelligent and sagacious of all fishes. Dr. Carroll Eugene Cook, noted angler, noted physician, and raconteur, tells of a charming woman who for many years has been on friendly terms with a large muskie which inhabits a lake near her summer cottage in Wisconsin. Morning and evening, when she taps on the wooden piling of the boat wharf, the big fellow promptly appears. She feeds him and he vanishes in the deep water. One year, she found

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the fish somewhat shy. Whenever she sounded the improvised dinner gong, he would flash past but would not stop. It was some time before she realized the cause of his strange behavior. She had recently bobbed her hair and the fish failed to recognize her!

The dean of all muskellunge fishermen lives at Rainy River, Ontario. His name is Ernest Calvert and he probably has captured more of these wary fish than any other living man. Best of all, he has promptly released, uninjured and unsung, practically all of them.

Leslie Wilson, poet and amateur camp cook, told me that Calvert once came near losing his happy home as a result of a generous impulse of this sort. The Calvert family was picknicking one Sunday at Turtle Portage. The son, Jack, was playfully throwing a spoon into a likely looking weedy bay.

"I'll show you how to do it," said Calvert jokingly. At his third cast there was a resounding smack and out leaped a 30-pounder, neatly hooked through the upper lip. The footing was slippery and the line an old one, but a master was at the butt of the rod, and 60 minutes later, Mr. Muskie was gasping on the grassy beach. The victor carefully removed the offending steel, gave the big fellow a reassuring pat of the right eyebrow with his wet palm, and shoved the monster back into the water.

Mrs. Calvert, a perfect representative of dignified British womanhood, was disgusted. "No fish for luncheon," she said. "A whole hour wasted! You catch a good one and throw it away!" Then, acidly, and apparently as an after-thought, "Did you kiss it good-bye?" Calvert's only reply was a grin.

After one unsuccessful trip to Lake of the Woods, I

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complained to Calvert that his little pets had failed to do their stuff. He was discomfited and apologetic at my charge.

"They will behave better, next time," he said.

But I am from Missouri. The following spring, as I was on the point of leaving for Mexico, came a letter from Calvert, inviting me to join him about September 1, for a 10-day trip on his 40-foot cruiser, *The Prospector*. Business was poor and collections worse, but an invitation of that sort was not to be sneezed at. We live only once and there are no asbestos pockets in a shroud.

I accepted, and early September found me at Rainy River. That afternoon we ran over to Cedar Island and early the next morning, with Perry Smith and John Quick as guides, Leslie Wilson as general factotum, and Calvert, Dr. Cook and Dr. Egan, and myself as fishermen, we pulled out. It was a cold, overcast day, with a light rain. An ideal day for muskie but apparently the muskies did not know it.

Our first stop was at Miles Bay, not far from the permanent summer camp. During the day, one fish snapped at Calvert's spoon and that was all. Our medical friends were due back in Chicago and early the next morning they and John Quick deserted us.

I always get a great kick out of associating with Dr. Cook. He is an ardent believer in the value of live bait and every time we meet he lectures me on the wonderful results to be obtained from the use of chubs, rigged out in a sort of dog harness that he has devised. It was a long time before I met a live chub. One day, while fishing in Yellow Girl Bay, we saw an old Chippewa Indian, running his nets. We paddled over to purchase some wall-

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eyes for food. I was hungry. Our time, or at least 12 hours a day of it, was taken up with hammering the waters for muskie that generally refused to bite. Apparently they were about as scarce as sea serpents. And when they did bite, Calvert insisted on turning them loose. This saddle-colored Chippewa had a boatful of chubs. It seemed to me they were nearly as large as tarpon! Think of casting bait like that! Only a Goliath could do it. But Dr. Cook is a strong man.

We stayed right on the job for nine days more. A favorite motto of mine is, "Be patient, and the world is yours," always providing, of course, that you work like blazes in the meantime and keep both eyes wide open. We saw muskies every day but it was not until the fourth afternoon that we really ran across any hungry ones.

By this time, we were near Sunset Channel. In honor of its discoverer, we named the rocky rendezvous "Perry Smith's Point." And were the muskies at home! They were. Heretofore, I had always considered the muskelunge anything but a convivial and gregarious creature. Within 3 hours, we got eight strikes, and Calvert landed two nice ones, a 27 and a 30-pounder.

I had all sorts of luck, except good luck. I jerked the plug out of the mouth of one Gargantuan old wildcat as he leaped into the air. Two struck at my bait at the same moment, fairly butting their heads together, and both missed. Later, as I cast far ahead of the boat and reeled in, a saucy 4-footer sprang high in the air, grazed Calvert's left ear, and smacked Perry Smith almost exactly on the collar button! It was a wild and tumultuous experience, one long to be remembered.

Calvert's prizes were carefully beached, Perry Smith wearing wet cotton gloves in the process to prevent injury

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to the fish's skin. We then photographed them and returned them, unhurt, to the water.

This part of the Lake is particularly good muskellunge territory. Next to Miles and Sabaskong Bays, it probably is the best fishing water in the entire lake.

We reached Yellow Girl Bay on the fifth day, and then turned back. The return trip was made by way of Lily Harbor and the Stairway Portage, although we spent one full day at our old anchorage in Miles Bay, near Mink Portage, where we found the fishing excellent.

In all, we raised 32 big fish and caught seven. No single bait appeared to be their choice, although a long yellow, jointed pikie, decorated with black spots, seemed to appeal to a good many. It was a weird-looking thing, and was called an "Otto Peters Special." Lord help the man who names a plug that looks like that after me! But it certainly was a killer. On previous trips, I had grown to depend largely upon red and white plugs. This time, I did not get a single strike on these colors. We found the old-fashioned Skinner spoons, single or double, with plain, feathered hooks, acceptable in a few instances. Surface baits were ignored.

Strange to say, the muskellunge is a home-loving creature. At first glance, no one would ever suspect it. But, year after year, you will find the same fish in practically the same spot, dozing in a bed of weeds, scratching its belly on the rough edge of a granite boulder, scowling at all the other big fish in the vicinity, and trying to outwit the little ones.

The guides—and in all the world I have never met better ones than these Ontario lads—know their fish and are familiar with their habits. To them, Old Baldy, who

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makes his home within a mile of Cedar Island, Bill, the monster at the Portage, and Methuselah, a moss-grown old demon down at the Narrows who simply glares at visitors and has never been known to strike at any sort of bait, are regular institutions.

Through lore of this sort I became acquainted with "Mister Richardson," a delectable individual who long made his home near a place called Painted Rock, in Sabaskong Bay. He was not a large fish when I first met him in 1927, not more than a 20-pounder. But even as an adolescent, he was a muskie of distinction. Maybe he had been properly trained. At any rate, he was a first-class tackle buster, right from the start.

The fish got his name from a Chicago friend of mine, named Richardson, who got the first recorded strike. Richardson brought the fish up to the surface but the hook failed to hold. At that time, the guide noted a long, slanting scar on the side of the head, just above the right gill. Six days later, I hooked him on my plug. The plug stuck but in some way the fish got a turn or two of the leader wire around its nose, the line came in contact with the sharp teeth, and a minute later I was dangling a useless outfit over the edge of the canoe. We named the handsome warrior "Mister Richardson" and never afterward during the open season did he lack for admiring and desirous visitors.

The next summer I raised him twice but each time he appeared a bit diffident, probably because of a wounded and tender mouth. My guide said that, early in July a Springfield angler had hooked and played him for almost an hour before the fish finally succeeded in snubbing the line around the tip of a pointed rock and, with the benefit of this additional leverage, breaking loose.



## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

The two following years, my vacations were spent in Africa and in Texas, but in 1931, I again saw Mister Richardson. Again he honored me with a strike and for the second time carried off some of my tackle. In 1932, Mrs. Herbert Phillips Lyle, an accomplished young angler from Cincinnati, almost succeeded in bringing the large and athletic gentleman into camp. But she, too, was outwitted in the end.

On the present trip, we reached the base camp Friday evening. Calvert's vacation ended there but I had one more day, and early the next morning, Perry Smith and I reported at Painted Rock. Much to our sorrow Mister Richardson refused to succumb to our wiles. Plugs and spoons, Shannon spinners, pork rinds, surface baits, variegated buck tails—none of them seemed to interest him in the least.

Most muskies must be regular night owls, for, as a rule, they sleep late in the morning. Consequently, we decided to drop in again, on our way home. Following a strenuous but uneventful day, punctuated only by the capture of two fairly large and wholly unappreciated pickerel, we started for camp.

"Don't forget Mister Richardson," I cautioned Perry.

"Oh, to hell with that old bird," irreverently replied my guide. "We'll never catch him. Let me take you to a real muskie, one that is hungry and means business."

"No," said I, firmly. "Mister Richardson or nothing."

Our old friend's lair was 3 miles out of our way but finally we sneaked up on him, and I began casting, outward, and away from the shore. I was using the famous yellow-and-black plug, the hooks of which had been carefully touched up with a file that very morning. My line

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had been reversed at noon. The slender and perfectly balanced hollow-steel rod, tough and springy as a Toledo blade, was ideal for my purpose. All I lacked was a fish.

I did not have long to wait. On the third cast, and while the bait was still some 50 feet from the boat, there was a wild splash and, a fraction of a second later, we saw the huge old battle-scarred leviathan vigorously shaking his head and trying his best to tear loose. Once, twice, three times he jumped, almost clearing the water. Then he made for deep water, dragging after him two gleeful fishermen and a little green boat. He pranced and sulked. He waltzed and charged. He tried to roll up in the line. Finally, he again came to the surface. Apparently the heavy tension was too much for a prolonged acrobatic performance. We slowly worked him across the little bay, where a few feet of sandy beach smiled a welcome.

When we reached the shore, Perry stepped out and wet and sanded his old cotton gloves. I headed Mister Richardson into the clear, ankle-deep water. He was a handsome brute, slender, graceful, and debonair. But his facial expression was not particularly pleasing or saint-like. Just back of the right ear the fish bore a long scar which looked as if, at an earlier date, an enthusiastic boatman had tried to break a canoe paddle over his head. The wound had healed nicely, however, and its presence really added somewhat to his rugged beauty.

Needless to say, Perry and I did not feel very bad. Mister Richardson was ours at last! But somehow, after the first thrill had subsided, we did not get quite the kick out of it that we thought we would. Mister Richardson did not seem to care very much how we felt, or what we thought. He simply glowered his disapproval of the whole business. He was everything but licked.

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

"Well, Perry," I said, "I—I guess we'd just as well—." I motioned to the open lake. Perry did not answer me. He lifted the big fellow out over the water and laid him gently down.

"Go to it, you cockeyed old devil!" he said, huskily. And Mister Richardson went.

## MOTHER MEETS THE SILVER KINGS

*When Winter drives our quarry down  
Into the sun-kissed Texas bay,  
We gather in the outer pass  
To bar the tarpon's way.*

*Out where the long, lean combers ride  
With sullen, ragged foam-flecked lips,  
And the beacon stands, with kindly hands,  
To guide the channel ships.*

—*Lays of Aransas Pass.*

**M**Y Father was a preacher, of the Alexander Campbell persuasion, and I was reared in a strict religious atmosphere. One of the admonitions which I particularly remember sounded something like this: "All that a man has, he owes to his wife." If it doesn't read like that, it should. And mine is a perfect wonder. Whenever anything is to be done, we just turn it over to "Mother," and forget all about it.

Up to a few years ago, there were only three fishermen in our family: Emmy Lou, who proudly and enthusiastically joined the fraternity when she snagged her first Minnesota pickerel; Dick, who began fishing as soon as he donned rompers and graduated at twelve by catching a whale, and Dad.

At about that time, mother one day annexed a large wall-eyed pike. The fact that the piscatorial gladiator was foul hooked, through the right ear, if I remember correctly, only added to the joyousness of the occasion. As I watched the lady fight that fish, and from the rear seat proffered unasked-for and promptly spurned advice,

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

I inwardly prayed that the goggle-eyed denizen of dear old White Fish Lake would awaken the angling instincts of my gentle and charming spouse. And the invocation was not in vain. As she brought the long, lank 8-pounder to net I saw her shoulders snap back and her chest protrude, not unlike that of a graceful young lady pouter pigeon, and when she turned to me with eyes sparkling and said, "I guess that's the best pike that will be brought into Piney Ridge this year," I knew that Old Izaak had a new convert! Since then I have had very little difficulty in persuading Mother to join me on my fishing excursions.

For many years, Dick and I have made an annual pilgrimage to Aransas Pass, Texas, after tarpon. I have had a rather wide experience with the silver kings in various parts of the world, but for the first class sport, under ideal conditions, Aransas has Panama, Mexico and Florida backed off of the map.

Prior to the great storm of 1919, Port Aransas was a prosperous little town, but the great tidal wave of that year swept it almost out of existence, and had it not been for the patient and untiring efforts of such men as Capt. Ed Cotter and his associates, the village would never have been rebuilt. But Captain Cotter is a man of vision and of energy, as well as one of the greatest of living sportsmen, and the little fishing hamlet is gradually becoming re-established.

The "Pass" lies between Mustang and Padre Islands, and is reached by boat from the city of Aransas Pass, the nearest railway point, in an hour. The channel is about 2 miles long, and one-eighth of a mile wide, and is guarded laterally by rough, granite jetties.

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The tarpon feed in the channel, and along the inner and outer sides of the walls, and are caught by trolling, with mullet for bait.

As a rule, our visits are made in July, so as not to interfere with my son's school work, but both Captain Cotter and Dr. J. A. L. Waddell, the eminent bridge engineer, and one of the greatest of tarpon fishermen, have always urged me to go the latter part of October.

So our plans for 1924 were formulated with this idea in view. One of my dearest friends, Nicholas Hunter, is an ardent angler, and Mrs. Hunter also is imbued with piscatorial aspirations. Consequently, we decided to make it a foursome.

We reached San Antonio on the afternoon of October 19, and caught the evening train, on the S. A. A. P., for Aransas Pass, via Gregory. On reaching Gregory at 5:55 the next evening, we found that if we waited for the local train, we would miss the mail boat which plies between Aransas Pass and the Port. An accomodating section foreman volunteered to carry us to Aransas, 11 miles away. He looked askance at our huge collection of luggage, but we finally succeeded in persuading him that a Ford was really only a baby truck in disguise, and at last we started off, half smothered beneath an avalanche of suit cases and hypertrophied patent leather hat boxes.

The gay little flivver fled down the varnished turnpike like a scared rabbit, and visions of a tarpon before breakfast played hide and seek in my eager and impatient, and over sanguine, brain. Suddenly and without previous warning the right rear tire went bad. "What's that?" demanded our sober and very practical conductor. I crawled out from under a pile of suitcases and took a look. The casing was as flat as if an elephant had stepped

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on it. "Got a spare tube?" I queried. "No, I ain't," acknowledged our crestfallen driver. But he was a good sport, and he not only carted us in on the rim, hat boxes and all, but refused to accept a \$2.00 tip, which might be used toward the purchase of a new tire.

We reached Port Aransas on time, hastily changed our clothing, made a feint at luncheon, and were ready for the bell.

In the summer time the fishing is done from skiffs, but in the fall launches are employed.

Nick and I, each with a wife on his arm, waltzed gaily down the dock, as happy as two debonair and unsophisticated young bridegrooms at an Eastern Shore clam-bake. The pass was a trifle choppy, but both of us are old sea dogs, and we didn't give the wavelets a second thought. Outward, past the snugly tethered water craft, our motor boats hummed, around Klein's Point, and up the stretch which lies in front of the Coast Guard quarters.

The tall beacons on the left, with the graceful gray gulls and the gravely nodding, grandfather pelicans, appeared to welcome us back, and off the end of the south jetty the breakers frothed and boomed. We had thrown our baits overboard, and adjusted our lines and reels, shortly after leaving the dock, and now we sat, sphinx like, and prayed the red gods to do their best.

We circled the inside buoys twice, and as we drew up to the big, red, anchored light, which marks the farthest point on the north wall, Mrs. Sutton began to register signs of mental and physical distress.

At best she is only a fair sailor, and at worst she is a very poor one, indeed. She didn't like the ground swell, and the combers, and the gaily nodding, pink cheeked,

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turnip-topped buoy at all. "Take me home," she said firmly. So we started back. "Hurry," she admonished. And we hurried. But I could see that she felt very, very much upset. Mrs. Hunter also was complaining bitterly. We ran up close to the other launch, and I traded mother for Nick. The boat containing the ladies was then headed for home. When about half way in, Mrs. Hunter hooked a wonderful fish, but her knees trembled so violently that she fairly shook it off the hook. Mother was too ill to even give expert advice.

Following an uneventful afternoon, Mr. Hunter and I reported back to headquarters. Our wives had each had a good nap, and they tried their best to persuade us to sit up and play bridge all night.

Tuesday morning dawned fair and clear, with just a wisp of a breeze. Nick and I decided to stag it, and the girls said they would run out later, and catch all they wanted, by themselves.

We fished the harbor and the channel and Klein's Point and the government dock yard, and even ventured far out to sea, but not a single strike rewarded our efforts. At noon we came home, to find that each of the ladies had not only hooked three tarpon, but actually had landed them unaided! Mrs. Hunter had been very nervous with her first one, and after playing it for five minutes had exclaimed that her knees were quaking again! Their boatman, Ed Dryer, is one of the best guides on the Gulf. "Lady," he roared, "if you shake a leg you'll lose that fish!" And the fair angler promptly calmed down and skillfully brought the big fellow to gaff.

That afternoon we offered to trade guides with them, but our kindness was repulsed with harsh words and scornful laughter.



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About 4 o'clock Nick had a tremendous pull, and when he drove the barb home a tarpon that looked to be as long as a fence rail came near jumping right into the boat. My partner gasped and his eyes stuck out almost an inch. On the second jump the captive succeeded in throwing the hook and escaping.

Half an hour later, while fishing near the other launch, we heard shrill screams, and on investigation found that our wives had captured a "double header," and the lines were crossed. The mess was finally untangled, and both tarpon landed. The one on Mother's hook was a monster, the largest I have ever seen.

As a rule the smaller fish, from  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 feet, are much livelier than the big fellows. The latter seldom jump more than two or three times.

Many men lose half the fish they hook by failing to handle them properly. In extenuation, it may be said that often the tarpon are biting "short," and one fails to hook them at all. The amount of line to be run out while trolling varies. Ernest W. Brown, of Des Moines, who has one of the finest private collections of mounted fish in America, if not in the world, is a great favorite of the short line, while D. H. Buxton, also of Iowa, and the present holder of the tarpon championship of the world, invariably uses from 75 to 150 feet. Captain Cotter, who for years stood at the head of the list, fishes for the silvery giants very much as the rest of us do for bass. I have seen him work in and out of the pockets along the jetties, catching a tarpon at every fifth or sixth cast, in a manner little short of marvelous.

For some extraordinary reason, our wives landed almost every fish they hooked. Nick thought it was be-

## MOTHER MEETS THE SILVER KINGS

cause they were so scared that they just lammed the hook in and then cranked for dear life! I ascribed it to Providence.

One fish in particular gave Mrs. Hunter a splendid tussle. By some mischance, she had skillfully hooked it in the left eyebrow. My old friend, O. V. Wilson, insists that only an expert can do this. This tarpon was middle aged, but far from obese, and, in fact, in very good physical condition. The capers that he cut would have made a sunfishing broncho look like a Fordson tractor. He did everything but explode. At the end of three hours, Lady Hunter, her fishing partner, and the indomitable Ed finally succeeded in snubbing him up close to the taffrail, and extracting the offending steel.

At Aransas, it is not considered good form to kill your catch unless you are going to have it mounted, and so all but four of our fish were released. The chosen ones were turned over to Alfred Roberts, the expert taxidermist, who lives on the island, and these will later adorn the walls of some of our northern clubs.

Wednesday night, a norther hit the Texas coast, and we were nearly blown off the beach. The following morning, the sea was very rough and choppy, and Mr. Hunter and I were the only ones to go out.

At the light, and along the reef on Klein's Point, within a long stone's throw of the home dock, we saw three tarpon feeding. Ed, who was acting as our guide, ran the boat in close to the beacon, and Nick snagged a monster. He fought it across the inner bay, jumping and bucking like an ill-mannered yearling calf, and finally brought it to gaff near the government wharf. Five minutes later, I hooked its twin, and my light rod snapped 2 feet back

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of the tip. I changed rods, caught another miniature whale, and broke the second rod! Meanwhile, Nick had captured another 6-footer. We ran in home, and I rushed over to Captain Cotter's house and borrowed one of his famous "unbreakable" Murphy hickory rods.

Nick had fished with one of these pieces of machinery all week, and as I usually helped him untie the knots in it every night, I had properly grown to have great confidence in these usually much abused but perfectly wonderful masterpieces from the planing mill. It stood me in good stead, for within the next two hours, I caught eight tarpon, not a one under 4½ feet, all of which we released after they had been played. Nick's luck also held, and when we ran out of bait, at 12 o'clock, the score was tied.

That afternoon, everybody rushed out, hoping to duplicate our performance of the morning. But the fish had departed southward, and not one of us got a strike!

Friday was our last day, and proved a hard one. The ladies lost out completely, but I got a big gar, one tarpon, and a 15-pound pike; and Nick got two pike, a 9 and a 10 pounder, both on mullet, with tarpon rig, and four sharks, one of them nearly 8 feet long.

Next October, all four of us plan to play a return engagement. And the one who first suggested this was Mother!

\* \* \* \* \*

Associated Press Dispatch, from San Antonio Light:

### A VERIFIED FISH STORY

Aransas Pass, Texas, October 23.—Mrs. Richard L. Sutton, of Kansas City, caught a tarpon measuring 6 feet and 8 inches, today. It is the largest tarpon caught here this season, and the record for women at Aransas Pass.

## NEW ZEALAND "SWORDIES"

*Rugged peaks, by the white clouds kissed,  
Sea birds circling in the falling mist,  
And lurking swordsmen that leap and wheel  
To the thrilling scream of the giant reel.*

*'Neath the towering cliffs where the ti trees cling,  
Nobody knows what the day may bring,  
Nor the happy moment that Fate has set  
For the lucky angler at fair Cape Brett.*

*—Cape Brett.*

**I**N some respects, men are like Missouri Mules; the food on the other side of the fence always looks just a little better and more succulent than that in the home paddock.

Particularly is this true of fishermen. As a rule, they are suspicious of the other man's story until it has been checked and verified, but once convinced, at the first opportunity, they dash forth and endeavor to do likewise.

I have long been an admirer of Zane Grey. He is a man after my own heart. He goes places and does things. In his novels, his broncho-busters are artists, his sheriffs and rangers are experts in love as well as in war, and virtue always triumphs. Sometimes I fear he overworks the ammunition racket a bit, but the good, clean stuff he turns out is the sort I like. I wish we had more of it.

In addition to being my favorite movie author, Mr. Grey has long served me as a sort of glorified Izaak Walton. What he has accomplished, I yearn to do, even though, for months afterward, it makes my poor old

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pocketbook look like something an elephant has been using as a door mat.

Two years ago, Chancellor E. H. Lindley, of the University of Kansas, and one of the greatest fishermen that Indiana ever mothered, gave me a copy of "Tales of the Anglers' Eldorado." I at once commenced collecting information relative to that gem of the South Pacific, New Zealand. During the following twelvemonth, I learned a good deal, and unlearned quite a bit more, the truth of which I have since verified by personal observation.

Previously, I had labored under the impression that this country, like Tasmania, was a sort of appendix to Australia. In reality, the two dominions have little in common.

It is almost as far from Wellington to Sydney as it is from Boston to Liverpool, and it took a friend of mine two weeks to travel from Auckland to Perth. The inhabitants differ almost as much as their respective countries. The Australians are of frontier stock, hail fellows well met, and the majority of them ready, at the drop of a hat, to go any place or do anything. I once overheard a sportsman in the Hotel Australia, at Sydney, offer to wager seven pounds on the coloration and arrangement of the whiskers of a transient cockroach, and he meant it.

Australia is a big country, and her sons are used to doing big things in a big way. With her huge sheep and cattle stations, her wheat fields covering hundreds of square miles, timber by the millions of feet, one of the most beautiful capitals in the whole world, and a harbor that makes that of Rio look like a well-worn pair of second-hand corduroy pants, it is little wonder that

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Australia is proud of her pristine beauties, and her marvelous accomplishments.

While Australia is a continent, New Zealand is the world's nearest approach to a modern Eden. Rich soil, an ideal climate, and a charming and industrious population combine to bring about this perfect end. I have never visited a more attractive land.

The swordfish season is from January to April, months that correspond to early fall in our northern hemisphere.

The best route is by way of Los Angeles, Honolulu, Pago Pago, and Suva (Fiji). It is not a long jump, and the large and comfortable liners easily cover the distance in about two weeks.

Mrs. Sutton, who is the real fisherman in our family, was anxious to have a look at Australia, consequently we went directly to Sydney. With that beautiful city of a million and a half as base, we made a motor trip through New South Wales. Our ship proceeded to Melbourne, and we rejoined her on her way home. We disembarked at Auckland early in February.

The fresh-water fishing in New Zealand is superb. Two of our shipmates, Captain and the Honorable Mrs. Richard St. Barbe Emmott, of London, profitably spent more than a month on the lakes and rivers of the North Island. To top off a very successful tour, the doughty Captain ran up to Cape Brett, and caught a fine striped marlin, a five-hundred pound black marlin, and a Mako shark nearly fourteen feet long, all in three days! The Lord certainly was with that piscatorial potentate.

Swordfish are found only near the north end of the North Island. The best fishing grounds are at Cape Brett, near Russell. A few anglers make the historic little

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town their headquarters, but when this is done, a great deal of time and gasoline are wasted, running back and forth from the Cape.

A much better plan is to register in at one of the several camps. Of these, the one at Baker's Island, named after Zane Grey, probably is best. All are inexpensive. As compared with the hotels and fishing camps on the east coast of Florida, they are about the greatest bargains on earth. We found both food and service excellent.

Other fishing territory is to be had at Whangaroa, Mercury Bay, Mangawai, Whangarei, and Tauranga. The last named probably is the best. Unfortunately, there are no permanent camps on Mayor Island, around which the marlin territory lies, and the run from Tauranga is long, and sometimes a bit rough, and may even be hazardous.

Zane Grey kindly gave me a letter of introduction to the Arlidge brothers, Francis and Merwyn, boatmen who had at various times guided him. Two finer or more capable men I have never met. They knew their business, and proved excellent shipmates. Their boats were new, and of the best. Despite the fact that gasoline costs forty cents a gallon, our inclusive boat hire averaged less than fourteen dollars per day. Compare this with similar accomodation in Florida during the height of the season.

The railroad which connects Auckland and Opuia, the station nearest Russell, is a narrow-guage line, and the trains run only once a day. Speed records are never broken. Approximately one hundred and fifty miles is covered in nine hours, flat. This of course includes the stops for tea at every second village along the route. Everyone was friendly and sociable, however, and we

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read, nibbled meat pies, drank Lipton's Best, and wondered what the morrow held for us.

Crossing the bay on the ferry, we reached Russell shortly after five.

E. C. Arlidge was expecting us, and within twenty minutes we were transplanted, bag and baggage, to the deck of a fast little speed boat, and on our way to Baker's (Urapukapuka) Island, twenty miles away. This picturesque bit of land on Otehei Bay, was the site of Zane Grey's first swordfish camp. On the way over, Mrs. Sutton and I wondered just what we would find when we got there. "I hope they let us have an entire tent to ourselves," she said, wistfully, probably thinking of the housing facilities on a recent Russian expedition. The water was quiet and serene, and in the fading light, the numerous yellowish-gray, tree-studded islands stood out against the sky line like time-stained etchings.

Unexpectedly, we turned a corner, as it were, rounded a tall, brown cliff, and headed straight into Otehei Bay. A row of snowy, red-roofed cabins, with a central club-room and dining hall, and a long and well-built pier, met our gaze. "What place is that?" I called to the boatman, up forward. "Zane Grey Camp!" he shouted back. You can imagine our delightful surprise. A perfect beach, a beautiful and well-kept lawn, several crystal-clear fresh-water springs gushing from the sides of the neighboring cliffs, and scores of large and hungry "swordies" feeding and leaping near the lighthouse, only half an hour away!

Just why marlin should be referred to as "swordies" is beyond me. God knows, if ever a creature had fewer of the attributes of a boudoir pet, I have yet to meet it. But "swordies" they are, from Dunedin to Whangaroa.



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By the time our boat was alongside the dock, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon McGlashan, the managers of the camp, were there to welcome us, and on the steps of the clubhouse, we were greeted by General and Mrs. Stewart Palmer, of Bombay, and another famous angler, Dr. G. B. Pierce, of New York, whose name is a household word throughout the islands. Dr. Pierce and his faithful and gallant boatman, George Warne, are known wherever big game fishermen foregather. When conditions are right, and the fish hungry, this doughty medico and his skipper think nothing of spending weeks at a time in a small launch, many leagues from civilization. And they certainly bring home the bacon.

We were quartered in a charming three-room cabin, which was equipped with a tub, hot and cold water, and very comfortable beds. Everything was as clean and tidy as a new pin.

Merwyn Aldridge, whom we drew as boatman, would not be free for another twenty-four hours. He turned us over to a friend, Jack Holmes, who is a well-known hunter and taxidermist. Jack had spent two seasons in Africa, and his collection of trophies is one of the finest and best in Australasia. His boat, the "Lorna Doone," was ready and waiting when we reached the dock at eight the next morning, and ten minutes afterward, we were speeding across Otehei Bay.

THE swordfish territory lies around Piercey Island and Dog Rock, just off the tip of Cape Brett, and extends as far out as Bird Rock, a mile off shore. The water is deep and clear, and fairly well protected. Thousands of gulls make their homes here, and school-fish, kahawai and trevalli for the most part, but also

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bonita and kings, in uncountable numbers. I had never before seen such myriads.

Fish of this sort, running from five to eight pounds, are used for bait. Trevalli do not strike, and must be snagged with a large triple hook, on a short and stiff casting rod, but kahawai readily take almost any surface bait. The usual lure is an oval brown wooden plug, three and one-half inches long, and one-half inch in diameter, with a single, 4/0 hook attached to it.

Dr. G. Ben Henke, of Ontario, California, to whom I am indebted for information regarding marlin fishing, is an enthusiastic advocate of the feather jig, and his farewell present, when he bade me good-bye in January, had consisted of a big tin box full of Japanese white-feather baits of this sort.

The manner in which the nimble kahawai tried to eat these up was a caution. Generally, fifteen minutes of strenuous work with the hand lines provides enough fresh bait for half a day. We would then run up close to the rocks and replenish our store.

In New Zealand, two methods of fishing for "swordies" are used—drifting, and trolling. This was my first experience with the former. Where the fish are fairly well congregated, it is the method of choice. While less thrilling than trolling, it is in this manner that the majority of the large, and wise ones are duped into taking a lure. Briefly, one of the lines is provided with a big cork or similar float—many anglers prefer small balloons—attached to the line just above the trace, or leader, and some twenty-five feet from the hook. Long and heavy traces are used, because of the sharks. In addition to the 14/0 Sorbey hook which carries the bait, a

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supplementary gang of large triple hooks is swung eighteen inches above the terminal single. The contrivance appears a bit murderous, but after all, one is out to catch fish, and not to practice medicine. The second line, provided two are used, and two generally are, is let down for a distance of sixty or eighty feet, directly overside. Care must be taken to avoid the snapper beds, otherwise these voracious denizens will make short work of the bait.

Having put out the lines, the engine is shut off, and the boat allowed to drift with wind and tide for a mile or more. The baits are then hauled in, fairly close to the boat, trolled back to the starting point, and another drift begun.

At San Pedro, near Guaymas, Mexico, which I consider one of the best marlin playgrounds in the world, during the season one sees a great many "surfacing" and jumping swordfish. I have counted as many as twenty-nine in a single day. At Cape Brett, we saw only three in three weeks, and in all that time we "raised" less than half a dozen, trolling.

Our experience, however, did not parallel that of some of our friends. Mr. Marsden Caughey, and his son, Harcourt, the latter a noted athlete, and a famous international football star, who had fished these waters annually for more than a decade, told us that they had caught their biggest black marlin trolling, near Piercey Island (this was also where the late Capt. Mitchell hooked his record black marlin).

Our first day proved uneventful, although Merwyn Arlidge and his party, fishing near by, landed a fine striped marlin at 11 o'clock. While one is liable to encounter a hungry fish at any time during the day, the best hours are from 11 A. M. to 4 P. M.

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The second day dawned bright and clear, and shortly after eight we were again back at Piercey. Bait proved a bit scarce, but Henke's jigs did not fail us, and in less than an hour we were drifting down and running back like old veterans. Merwyn's launch, a 34-footer, equipped with a new 6-cylinder engine, was one of the snappiest and most seaworthy little craft that I have ever seen. During our entire stay, the engine never faltered or balked once. When the button was pressed, things began to move, and they continued moving until the switch was turned off.

Mrs. Sutton caught her first big fish that morning. It was a striped marlin, and weighed 297 pounds on the clubhouse steelyards, late in the afternoon.

Her bait was a 7-pound kahawai, attached to the line having a float. The cork began bobbing up and down, and Merwyn's watchful eye immediately spotted the agitation. "Be sure your reel is free," he cautioned.

But my little wife needed no coaching. She had hooked far too many big ones in her time. Slowly, and spasmodically, the cork retreated. I feverishly reeled in my bait. Twenty, thirty, forty yards of Mrs. Sutton's line left the spool. Then fully fifty more, at almost a single jerk. "Careful!" shouted Capt. Arlidge, "He's coming up!" Mrs. Sutton tightened the drag on her big Hardy Zane Grey reel, gave the handle a twirl, and took up most of the slack. At that instant, the big fellow poked his nose out of the water, two hundred yards away. Merwyn already had the engine going.

"Strike, strike, strike!" he fairly shouted. He opened the throttle. The road was clear and the line was taut. The butt of the rod was already in the seat socket, the tip pointing directly toward the giant quarry. I saw the

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lady set her jaw, and the way she yanked that rod up into the air reminded me of the hair-pulling days of my childhood.

"Hit him again!" whooped the boatman. "Soak him. You can't hit him too much!" As the tip came down, more line was reeled in.

Almost as quick as a flash, Mrs. Sutton struck again, and struck hard. Fortunately, the furious monster had turned its head away from the boat. Never a foot of slack did it get. We tightened the clutch another half turn, and Merwyn helped Mrs. Sutton slip on the harness, and removed the back of the swordfish chair. "Now, Mama, let's see you do it," I chirped, gleefully, from my comfortable seat near the wheel. The lady was proud, but not bubbling over with confidence.

"That's a big fish," she finally gasped. "Suppose I watch you while you fight it." "Not me," I replied. "It's your marlin. You play with it, while the captain and I have a spot of Scotch, and nibble a bite of luncheon."

The boat traveled in a wide circle, and at the end of an hour, we were back in our original position. Finally the old boy got fed up, and decided to travel for a while on his own. The lady began losing line, despite her most strenuous efforts to regain it. I was glad that we had placed nearly a thousand yards of my pet number 36 Jim Richards Special on the spool before we started. At three pounds to the strand, it takes a hefty fish to break a line of that sort. I have yet to meet one that can do it. And thirty feet of double leader, plus twenty-five feet of heavy steel trace, gives one an additional feeling of security when nearing the end of the battle. The rod was an M. E. Hoag Cable built, 16-strip masterpiece, and as fine a bit of work as even that consummate artist ever

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produced. After more than a dozen hard struggles with giant fish, it is still as straight and true as a rifle barrel.

We swung the boat around, and ran up a little closer, but our prize fought like an old master of the ring. Every foot of line that we gained had to be paid for with labor and perspiration. And just about the time Mrs. Sutton thought she had him subdued, the whirring reel would remind her that she hadn't. The side plates began to warm up, and in her haste, the lady occasionally failed to level the line on the spool. Complications developed. Twice the wary gentleman at the far end of the rig endeavored to run underneath the boat. Finally, the fish sounded, six hundred feet down. "Suppose we just tie him up, and I'll rest for an hour or two," suggested the unsophisticated near-captor. But Merwyn and I both hastened to assure her that it was now or never, if she hoped and expected to bring the old boy into camp. And so, with blowing hair, and cramped fingers, and an aching back, the little woman stuck to the job.

It was three hours, almost to the minute, before the monster was brought alongside. A loop was thrown around its tail, and Merwyn and I hauled it aboard. It was an exultant but exceedingly weary young lady who greeted her happy friends at the dock that February evening.

The Caville Islands lie about twenty miles north and east of Cape Brett, and occasionally the fishing there is excellent. This is one of Dr. Pierce's favorite spots, and at times he catches so many that his friends jokingly accuse him of having to charter an extra boat in which to bring home his prizes.

We spent two days at the Cavilles, but were unfortunate. It was stormy, and the sea was rough.

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My best fish, weighing three hundred and fifty-two pounds, was hooked drifting, near Bird Rock.

The Mako shark is a famous game fish, and a very sporting proposition. Our best one was only 250 pounds, but it leaped seventeen times, and put up a wonderful fight.

Lady Broughton, of London, a noted British sports-woman, with Peter Williams as boatman, once caught a very fine Mako while fishing near us, at Dog Rock. A regular circus performance followed. The battle lasted more than two hours.

The teeth of the Mako shark are calculated to astonish even the most experienced and hardened of dentists. There are several rows of them, and as fast as one tooth is broken off, a new one revolves upward, or downward, to take its place. According to the researches of my friend, Mr. Marsden Caughey, this variety is found only in the waters of New Zealand, Japan, and the Phillipines.

One of the pleasant features of life at Zane Grey Camp is the great number of acquaintances a visitor makes. Eminent anglers and other noted folk from all over the world are to be met there. Good fellowship prevails. Mr. Baker, the owner of Urapukapuka Island, resides near the clubhouse. He is a Russell pioneer, and a most interesting gentleman.

Gordon McGlashan, the manager, is a Scot, and like nearly all of his countrymen, a very well-read man. He can compose a sonnet, dash off a couplet, or pen a vigorous limerick at a moment's notice.

He has only one weakness. Almost the minute he gets out of sight of land, he becomes seasick, and sometimes he is seasick while still in sight of land. But he is one

## NEW ZEALAND "SWORDIES"

of the best sportsmen in Christendom. Sick or well, he goes fishing in spite of everything. On several occasions, when the weather was bad, Mrs. Sutton cancelled her reservation. I could always depend upon Gordon to fill the vacant chair—for a time at least. If he did not succeed in catching a fish before a quarter after ten, however, he was out of luck. At 10:17 sharp, Gordon would become ill, and he would remain ill all the rest of the day. One might think that a single experience of this sort would be sufficient to cool his ardor and cramp his style, but it never did. By the time we reached home, he was able to stow away a good dinner, and the next morning he would pop up again, fit as a fiddle, and apparently as good as new.

It was at the close of such an eventful trip that he wrote his version of a day on the Bay of Islands.

### CAPE BRETT

(With apologies to the Hon. Dr. Sutton)

*"Oh keep your Piercey Island,  
Cape Brett and Bird Rock, too,  
Your circling gulls and your jumping fish,  
I give them all to you.  
The schoolfish and the screaming reel,  
The ocean's gentle swell,  
To you, they may be Heaven,  
To me, they're simply Hell.*

*I'll never make a fisherman,  
No matter how I try,  
While other folk enjoy it,  
I simply want to die.  
I cannot get excited  
When I see the largest fin,  
And if you can stand the drifting,  
Well, you beat me, 'Gunga Din.' "*



## TEMPESTUOUS TAMPICO

*Where pulque flows like water,  
And passion's madly fanned;  
There is no right,  
Save the law of might  
Down south of the Rio Grande.*

*—The Ranger's Lament.*

**T**O the majority of us, Tampico is a little more than a state of mind. The nearer the border we live, the more violent the cerebral agitation, and, as in most imaginary ills, we are generally about ninety-nine per cent wrong. The only way to find out is to make a personal investigation.

My long time friend, Dr. J. A. L. Waddell, a famous consulting engineer and a fisherman of parts, had often told me of the wonderful sport to be had in the Panuco and its tributaries. Consequently, when Senor Fredrico Shelton, formerly of Missouri but more recently of the Ebullient Republic, insisted that I pay him a visit, he didn't have to insist very hard.

The transportation problem is a simple one. Of course, one can make the trip via steamer, out of New York, or Galveston, but the railroad route is the quicker. A through sleeper from Houston greatly facilitates matters, and courteous conductors and capable stewards tend to make the trip a journey de luxe.

Money had best be exchanged at Brownsville. Incidentally, the process should be repeated at this point on return; otherwise the unwary traveler will find his Mexican coinage rapidly shrinking in value the nearer he approaches home.

## TEMPESTUOUS TAMPICO

At Matamoros, which is located on the Rio Grande River, opposite Brownsville, we got our first glimpse of Mexico. The customs officials, in brown uniforms, huge sombreros, and leather leggings, fairly bristle with six-shooters, but they showed us every courtesy and apologized profusely as they ransacked our luggage.

Matamoros is a decrepit little burg, with muddy streets and wretched sewage facilities, but I feel sure that much of its unsavory reputation as a city is due to the disheveled morals of frequent pilgrims from across the line. The native drinks are not calculated to inspire tranquillity or to promote rectitude, and I should imagine that a St. Louis drummer full of tequila might create just as much of a disturbance in Matamoros as a saddle-colored section hand, properly "lit" up with American home brew, would promulgate in, we will say, Emporia. And we all know what would quickly happen to a pink-haired Mexican spike tickler who was so thoughtless as to become intoxicated in the state of Kansas!

Tequila is a very stimulating beverage. One whiff from the cork is enough to disarrange totally the repressive faculties of an ordinary Sunday School Superintendent; and its admirers claim that a generous swallow is good for a two-day lay-off, and if, on the third day, the victim will drink a little water, and thoroughly shake himself, it will be at least another thirty-six hours before he completely recovers consciousness.

The composition of the drinks may have something to do with the temperamental character of the inhabitants, but I believe that this is largely a result of climate and environment. Near Monterey, we picked

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

up a handsome ex-general, who spent the evening drinking beer and reading a Spanish picture magazine. When he started to leave us, at 4:30 the next morning, the periodical could not be found, and the noble disciple of Mars walked up and down the car aisle, waving a pearl-handled gun and swearing vengeance on the entire Mexican National Railway System.

The Pullman conductor, Mr. Flores, who is a gentleman and a scholar, tried his best to calm the irate brigadier, but he refused to be calmed; and it was not until the badly frightened porter discovered the dog-eared piece of literature in the reading room of the smoking compartment, and returned it to el Generale, that we could proceed peacefully on our way.

To the outlander, the most striking feature of the country is the rather incidental manner in which the peons exist. They live in straw huts that in a temperate climate would not comfortably house a speckled dog, sleep on dirt floors, along with the family pets, including four or five mongrel hounds and a pet pig or two, work when they must, eat when they can, and appear to be comparatively happy and fairly well contented. And invariably they are courteous and polite to all strangers, a peculiarity which we at home might well emulate.

The degree of poverty is almost unbelievable. I have seen families of ten and twelve, whose entire earthly belongings were not worth more than four dollars. Apparently, Providence tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, for, aside from the more common parasitic diseases that invariably flourish among people who live in overcrowded quarters and who have a

## TEMPESTUOUS TAMPICO

natural idiosyncrasy against soap and water, there is comparatively little sickness among the adult population. Speaking from the results of superficial survey, however, I should judge the infant mortality rate to be rather high.

The majority of the rivers are clay banked, and the water yellowish and turbid. If game laws exist, they are honored mostly in the breach, for I have been assured that one can purchase venison, wild turkey, and duck in the open market throughout the year.

Tampico was reached after dark, and we were warned of its vicinity by the porter, who pulled down all of the curtains in order to lessen the temptation of the natives to throw rocks through the windows, and by the conductor, who conscientiously urged us to cling tightly to our hand luggage when we disembarked if we hoped ever to see it again.

At 8:30, the train pulled into the station, and over the bushy heads of the howling mob I saw the smiling face and broad shoulders of my beloved host, Mr. Shelton. He afterward apologized for his unshaven appearance, but shaved or unshaved, he looked like a nickel-plated angel in that mob.

In 1890, Tampico was a ragged, straggling nondescript village of 10,000 with an American population of approximately 250. In 1922, it had jumped into the 100,000 class, five per cent American. Needless to say, one can diagnose these wandering brethren at a glance and they are as clannish as a bunch of Scots. Open-handed and hospitable as only the Irish can be, they stand ready to do everything possible to render one's visit both profitable and pleasant.

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

The first morning that I spent in Tampico, I was introduced to nineteen of my fellow countrymen. Eighteen of them guided me straight to the bar of the Colonial Club, and the nineteenth had something in his pocket. The fact that I am a teetotaler didn't worry them in the least. While they considered my attitude as more or less of an infirmity, they felt certain that time and association would ultimately bring about a cure.

Senor Fredrico is a golfer, and not a fisherman; so after seeing me comfortably installed in the bridal suite of the Hotel Imperial, he rushed off to round up a few fellow anglers. Fortunately he found three local champions disengaged: the Dean, Mr. William Farrant, whom I feel sure is a Sir William in disguise, but who circulates among his innumerable friends and admirers under the affectionate and euphonious appellation of "Bill"; Paul Greenwood, the "Don Pablo" of the entire American Colony; and Leslie A. ("Big Boy") Ratliff, who trolls for tarpon when he isn't fishing for lost oil tools.

We chartered a small sea-going launch, with two rowboats as "tenders", for the afternoon, and at two o'clock we "hopped off".

November to April are the fishing months, and the tarpon bite best between the hours of two and six. Practically all of the fishing is done in the Panuco River, above the half-completed steel railroad bridge. Sometimes the tarpon are more plentiful in the immediate vicinity of the bridge, but in February the upper reaches of water are more fruitful.

Up the broad river scurried the little launch, with the rowboats trailing and bobbing, and the swarthy

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helmsman tooting the hand-driven horn at every passing craft. Past the mouth of the Tamesi, beneath the bridge, up to the tiny straw-built village of Tamos we went. Finally, just opposite the wreck of the Mexican gunboat Vera Cruz, a memento of the late revolution, Sir William suggested that we "slow down the motor a bit, and wet a line."

Two of us trolled from the smaller boats, which were held in tow, and two from the rear deck of the launch.

Methods of fishing for tarpon vary with the season and locality, and it is always wisest to follow the example of successful local fishermen. Sam's spoons, Nos. 7 and 8, without weights, appeared to be what the silver kings here wanted, and we were prepared to give them their fill. Mr. Farrant had tried mullet, but without success, a few days before, and cut bait in the channel they would not touch.

So back and forth, from the Vera Cruz to the orange grove in the bend, four miles upstream, we went. It was a slow afternoon, and the fish were running only medium in size, from four and a half to five and a half feet. But they had plenty of pep and vivacity, and when one was hooked and his lucky captor had slid into the rowboat and yelled, "I've got him, cut me loose!" there was plenty of excitement.

"Ride 'im, cowboy, ride 'im. Keep a stiff upper lip and a tight line!" the others would admonish, and off over the water they would go, the fish buck-jumping at every yank on the rod. It is little wonder that a confirmed tarpon fisherman is almost a driveling idiot regarding his favorite sport.

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The swift, certain pull, followed by the breathless wait as the barb sinks home, the wild dashes for liberty when the monster swings upward, clear of the surface, and shakes his head in his frantic efforts to throw the hook, the uncertainty of success, even after the fish apparently is exhausted, all tend to make the game one that is well worth while. Who can blame the devotee who travels a thousand miles or more, two or three times a year, to try his luck?

That first afternoon I hooked six, but succeeded in landing only two, being low man of the quartette. All of my fish were good fighters, however, and I would rather work on a lively one and finally lose him, than beach a "deader."

The next day Mr. Shelton, his charming sister, Miss Sallie, and I were to be the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Muersch on a trip up the Tamesi. This river is a wonderful tropical stream, and the valley through which it flows is as rich as that of the Nile. The vegetation consists mainly of orange and banana groves interspersed with palms, and is very beautiful. The native settlements along the banks look prosperous, and the people appear well-fed and happy.

We had planned to try for small fish in the lagoons far upstream, and when we boarded the Anna Mae at the Trans-Mex. wharf we were equipped for everything from sun perch to elephants. The powerful little boat shot out into the stream, under the Tamesi bridge, and up the watery roadway as smoothly, and almost as rapidly, as a motor-car on a city boulevard. We passed scores of home-going market skiffs—long, narrow cockleshells that had been skillfully carved from tree trunks, sharp at bow and stern, and

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propelled by a single-bladed paddle in the hands of a professional, born to the job.

Once we stopped to witness a friendly cock fight on the bank. The natives are very proud of their roosters, and will bet their last centavo on a favorite pugnacious little fowl.

Our quest after small fry was unsuccessful, and so after ascending the river about forty miles we decided to turn back and try the Panuco. The Anna Mae was such a fast boat that it was difficult to throttle her down to trolling speed, but Alphonso, the engineer, was an expert, and we knew he would do his best. We had no tender, but thought we would risk a trial anyway.

Scarcely had the spoons hit the water, when Mr. Shelton got a tremendous strike and hooked a giant almost seven feet long. The big fellow did not take at all kindly to leading strings, and as the drag on Fred's reel was lightly set, several hundred feet of line slipped off in less time than it takes to tell it.

Back and forth, up and down, Shelton fought the silvery monster, the ladies shrieking fearfully every time the leviathan broke water, I yelling unsought advice, and the perspiring fisherman cranking for dear life. At last the tarpon made a long, despairing run, but the line still looked taut as Fred began reeling in. "Is he still on?" I breathlessly inquired. "No, thank God, he got away," said Fred wearily, as he collapsed on the rear seat.

It was then my turn, and after twenty-five minutes of watchful waiting I snagged a twin to the first one. I fought him from the cockpit and he proved a warrior



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worthy of any man's steel. After three-quarters of an hour of hard work, I felt sure that the hook was firmly set; so I yelled to Alphonso to give him a ride.

The Anna Mae shot away like an arrow, and we dragged that fish over about forty quarter sections of yellow water. But drown he would not! We had no gaff, and the deck was about three feet above the surface of the river. The fish was too heavy to be dragged aboard bodily, and we were in a quandry.

At last we were rescued by a brother fisherman whom we overtook far up the river. He loaned us not only a gaff but also an experienced boatman. Fred insisted upon doing the honors, and the fish reciprocated his courtesy by trying to break three of his ribs and knock him out of the boat afterward. I have never seen a tarpon that fought so hard and so long.

On our final round the fish were "rolling," and we saw literally hundreds of the big fellows in the first five miles of water above the bridge. Friday, I had eleven strikes and landed seven fish, and by night I felt as if I had been shocking wheat all day.

For Saturday afternoon, a group of enthusiasts had planned a real fishing party, but business engagements of various sorts depleted the group until only four men were left: Dr. Allen M. Walcott, of the International Health Board, Mr. Simon Casey, Mr. Ratliff and myself.

Dr. Walcott had never caught a tarpon, and we wanted to initiate him. We spent the afternoon on the Panuco between Tamos and the orange grove, and captured a total of eight fish. A wonderful little three-footer fell prey to Dr. Walcott's rod. The eminent medico struck

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like a professional, and yanked the stripling in with such skill and alacrity that I doubt if it ever realized what had hit it.

At Aransas Pass, Corpus Christi, and usually at the Florida resorts, we release the majority of the captured fish, but here we turned them over to our boatman, or to the natives on shore. Peons are perpetually hungry, and not particularly fastidious.

We had a very enjoyable afternoon, with more than twenty impartially distributed strikes, and spent our spare time discussing plans for a permanent tarpon club on the Panuco.

Far up in the country runs a little river, El Rio Cruz, which empties into the Tamesi, and which Ratliff and Pablo Greenwood have fished every winter for many years. They insist that is the rendezvous of innumerable big-mouth black bass of ferocious and combative temperament, and strengthen their assertions by photographs of goggle-eyed monsters that tend to make a fisherman's blood pressure oscillate around the 200 mark. Some day I am going to visit that seductive little river, and if the fishing is as good as they say it is, I am liable to change my permanent postoffice address.

Sunday being my last day in Tampico, Mr. Muersch had kindly arranged for an all-day trip up the river, and at seven o'clock, when the big boat pulled up at the dock for us, it looked like a transatlantic liner. The crowd included Mr. Shelton, his sister, the inimitable Miss Sallie, Mrs. Muersch, Senor Luis Gardo, Eddy Murphy, the famous golf pro, Mr. Muersch and his first assistant, William, and the man from Kansas City.

Breakfast was awaiting us—such a breakfast as only

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

Mrs. Muersch knows how to plan; and as the perfectly trained Chinese servants came and went we made marvelous inroads on the tropical fruits and other delicacies, I thought of the Texan's opinion of Mexico. Mistaken diagnoses are not altogether confined to the medical profession.

Near the Custom House we picked up a couple of rowboats, and then slowly wended our way up the river. We reached the Vera Cruz about nine o'clock, and went to work. Despite persistent effort, however, we caught only one fish before noon, and we were just a trifle blue and depressed when dinner was announced. But no human being could be melancholy in the face of such a feast, and an hour later we were once more hot on the trail. Shortly afterward I got a strike, and within the next hour I had hooked six and lost four of them.

All the week I had been using a light split bamboo rod, a cherished pet of my son Dick, and a No. 9 reel, about the size of a locomotive fly-wheel, but as smooth-running as a watch.

With the superstition of a true disciple of old Izaak, I insisted that Charlie Muersch try my tackle for a while. Scarcely a hundred feet of line had slipped through the guides when he hooked a fish that looked like the granddaddy of all tarpon, and as we turned his boat adrift I muttered a little prayer in his behalf, and he certainly needed it! He fought that fish all over the upper reaches of the Panuco, and the way it fought back was a credit to the entire finny tribe.

At the end of the first half-hour it looked as if the tarpon would win, for Charlie had lost his hat, one sleeve of his shirt and part of his pants, and the oarsman looked like a battleship stoker at the end of a hard watch;

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but Charlie was game, and ultimately he succeeded in leading his untamed little pet alongside the boat. In order to handle the gaff, his oarsman had to step over the seat, and as the ticklish craft responded to the shifting cargo, King Tarpon managed to win a little slack, and the next second it was off for the Gulf!

My heart went out to the crestfallen captor, for he had played the game like a seasoned veteran; but no man who plays this game can hit 100 per cent. The little rod continued to exhibit a touch of the Divine, however, for its wielder got three more strikes within the next sixty minutes.

Eddy Murphy, petite, pink and peppy, was bewailing his fate and lamenting his luck in three different languages when the red gods smiled, and he found himself firmly attached to a hundred and sixty pounds of piscatorial fury. We cut the rope, and Eddy and his guide, a diminutive Mexican about as big as a piece of soap and just about as intelligent, were adrift on the sunkissed waves.

The only Spanish that Eddy knew was *adelente* (fore), and he immediately began yelling it at the top of his voice. The boatman glanced over his shoulder, and one glimpse of the quarry was enough for him. I doubt whether he had ever seen a tarpon before, for his eyes popped out about an inch and he pulled for the shore for all he was worth.

"Adelente! Adelente!" bellowed Eddy.

"Si, senor, si." replied the boy at the oars, and up into the near-by orange grove they went. It was a three-ring circus while it lasted, but finally Murphy got the fish under control, stuck a gaff into the seat of his boatman's trousers and turned him seaward, and settled down to

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tire out his captive. After an hour's hard labor, the doughty firsherman not only conquered the silvery giant but actually gaffed and boated it himself.

Meanwhile, we had been putting on a little performance of our own aboard the big launch. There was not enough tarpon tackle to go around, so Senor Gardo, "Luie" for short, elected to try for one with a hand line. He stationed himself on the canopy and trailed three hundred feet of jewfish line attached to a spoon about as big as a soup plate behind our little brigantine.

Business was slow, but while we were watching the antics of Murphy and his associates, Luis got a strike, and a real one. Fortunately, he had on his gloves at the time, or he would have been utterly ruined. One wild whoop as the fish was hooked, and then pandemonium reigned.

Frantic broncho busters and sun-fishing outlaws were child's play alongside Luis and that tarpon! "I've got him, I've got him!" he kept repeating in Italian, Mexican and English. "Oh, le feesh nobale, le monstier exquisete. Uruguay, Paraguay, Guatemala!" whooped Luis, "I will show him ze treeck. I will snake him from ze depths!"

Dear old Luis, never again, not even when he stands up to be married, will he be so excited.

My boat was directly beneath his line, and as he dragged that monster in, hand over hand, it would have done your heart good to see the nimble way in which two hundred pounds of slender, bald-headed LL. D. skipped up the side of that launch. At Aransas Pass I once saw a handsome young man try to hug a lively and athletic tarpon to death, and never since have I yearned to entertain an unkilld fish in my boat.

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Luis refused all assistance, and it was not until the fish was dangling over the side that he allowed anyone else to touch the line. Then Mr. Shelton and two of the sailors aided him in gaffing it and dragging it aboard. It was six feet six inches long, and the diameter of a saw log. No wonder Luis was the happiest man in the United States of Mexico!

This practically ended the exciting program for the day, and my southern vacation. That night I packed my duffle, and the next morning at the heart-breaking hour of five, reluctantly clambered aboard my homeward-bound Pullman.

## "A NACHERAL BORN RETRIEVER"

**S**TALKING elephants is a thrilling pastime, and tiger hunting an experience long to be remembered, but for pure, unadulterated enjoyment, in my opinion nothing quite equals quail shooting over a well-trained dog. Given good territory, pleasant weather, and congenial companionship, it is the best sport in the world.

In Missouri, late autumn is the most delightful period of the year. Personally, I prefer a little snow, just enough to moisten the ground as it melts. The quail is a late sleeper, and one can seldom hope for much action before nine or ten o'clock in the morning.

For more than a decade, I have spent at least two days out of every season with some old and dear friends in the northeastern part of the state, Lewis McBride, a cattleman and feeder of Baring, Missouri, and his shooting companion, Larry Berberet of the Knox County Oil Company, who resides at Edina, four miles away.

About equidistant from these two charming mid-western villages is a lake of considerable size, belonging to a railway company, and it is on the banks of this clear and delightful body of water that the Baring Country Club is located. There is a large and comfortable clubhouse, in charge of Charles Franz, a wonderfully capable and efficient manager, with half a hundred small cottages, belonging to the various members of the club, scattered about the grounds. In summer, the fishing is excellent. In winter, the buildings are unoccupied, but can be opened at a moment's notice to accommodate visiting sportsmen and their friends.

The people of Knox County are among the most hos-

## "A NACHERAL BORN RETRIEVER"

pitable and generous in the world; consequently, one is always assured of a kindly and gracious welcome.

Baring is five hours by rail from Kansas City, and we generally arrive at midnight. Our hosts meet us at the station and carry us out to the club. A hot drink, a brief visit, then five or six hours of sound slumber, interrupted only by an occasional snore from some occupant of the "quiet" cabin. Both Lewis and Larry are homebodies, in fact, I doubt if their wives would trust them abroad after dark; consequently, the job of entertaining guests like myself is generally turned over to some of their partners in crime such as Barney Schwarzweller, Earl Hull, Dutch Sandknop, Bill Krueger, Clem and Frank Knapp, and last, but not least, the honorable Johnny McGinnis ("Guinea" to his intimates). A more joyous and festive group would be hard to find. Barney, who is an insurance man when not on leave, is a prince. Happy, convivial, chock-full of anecdotes, a splendid amateur cook and an excellent shot, he is one of the most popular bachelors in northeast Missouri. Built on the same generous physical plan as your humble narrator, only some two feet shorter, he is not much of a pedestrian, particularly in deep snow, but what he lacks in speed and endurance he makes up in vivacity and personality, and, hot or cold, wet or dry, Barney is always on hand at the finish.

One of his greatest accomplishments is his ability to snore, in any key, and at any place. I admire this gift, for I, too, am a snorer, but only in a minor sort of way. Dick, my son, young, nervous and high-keyed, is less enthusiastic, and he once moved from the cabin to the hotel at Baring, and later to Edina, in order to pass a restful night, just because Barney and I made rough, hoarse,



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vibratory noises during our sleep. Fortunately, hypersensitive individuals like that are rare.

For a long time, I had promised one of my friends, Judge Albert L. Reeves, of the Federal District Court, who is a famous wing shot as well as an eminent jurist, a quail hunt. Unfortunately, during the past season, both of us were tied down by professional duties until the first week in December. Some of our agricultural friends promised to save a few birds for us, however, and shortly after Thanksgiving we departed for Baring. It was cold in northern Missouri, and the country roads were almost impassable, but an inveterate bird hunter laughs at weather conditions.

Larry and Earl Hull met us at the train, Barney had Larry's cabin at the Club ready, and by one o'clock all of us were sound asleep. The next morning, we started out, three men and two dogs in Larry's car, and two dogs and three men in a new Plymouth driven by the inimitable Dutch.

The territory selected for the day was a big farm owned by the Hawker brothers, in Schuyler County, thirty miles away. After leaving the highway, the roads were execrable. I have never encountered worse. Once Larry stopped for a moment to converse with a sociable horseman. Dutch, who was driving the rear car, did not discover that we had halted until it was too late. He slid thirty yards and smote our rear end with a resounding smack, like a trip hammer. My hair assumed the position of the bristles on a new toothbrush, but fortunately no one was killed. It looked as if Dutch had shortened his wheel base about fourteen inches, but, as he said, the car was a "tough little devil" and, aside from develop-

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ing a sort of post-Volstead wobble, it continued to function quite well.

Finally, we reached our destination, a well-built farmhouse, far out in the country. The Hawkers were expecting us and, after a brief chat with them, we separated into two groups—the Judge, Larry, Wilbur Jeans (who was to carry my Graflex) and I going one way, Dutch and Dick, the other.

The snow greatly impeded our progress. The crust was hard enough to support the weight of a small jack rabbit and that was about all. I weigh 240 pounds, and before we had covered three miles, my tongue was hanging out. Judge Reeves shot in his usual finished style. When a bird got up anywhere in his vicinity, he killed it. I thought I had succeeded in convincing Larry that a twenty-bore was the one and only weapon for upland game, but, as he earnestly explained, this was not time to monkey around with fancy tools; what we ardently desired was a mess of birds. Consequently, when he dragged out his old pre-war twelve-gauge, cylinder bored automatic corn-sheller, I made no comment.

The birds stuck closely to cover all day. In fact, about the only way in which you could get one out was to step on its tail.

Our dogs were a pair of fine pointers, brother and sister—"Bob," belonging to Larry, and "Lady" to Lewis McBride. I had previously shot over both of them, but never before in heavy snow. Like all men who love their dogs, Lewis was very proud of "Lady." He always referred to her as "a nacheral born retriever," but not until that eventful day did I fully appreciate the reason why. Lady took a great fancy to the Judge, who is just the sort of person that any intelligent dog would fall for.

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We had gone less than a quarter of a mile when both pointers began to show signs of quail fever. Apparently the birds were running down a long draw, in a fodder field. Unexpectedly, Lady stopped near an old brush pile, at the edge of the gully, and made a point. We came up and, with everybody at the ready, I jumped on the snow-covered mound. Nothing came out, but Lady went almost wild. She pranced and she hopped, she thrust her nose this way and that, and finally crawled far in under the bushy mass. A moment later, she jerked herself free from the clinging twigs and, as she emerged, I saw that she held something in her mouth. She trotted solemnly over to Judge Reeves, and laid a much-disheveled quail at his feet!

We tramped out the draw, and a small flock of birds arose, about one hundred yards ahead of us. A little farther on, near an abandoned schoolhouse, a solitary cock got up and swung far out to the left. The Judge dropped him at fully fifty yards, with the left barrel of his little 16-bore Smith.

Lady, the Judge and Larry cut across toward the schoolhouse, almost directly in front of it, and close to a high bank which bordered the roadway, Lady made another stand. Bob and I were still combing out the flat at the lower end of the big draw. The two sportsmen walked up behind Lady, but she stood fast. They could see nothing. Larry urged her forward. Finally, she made a dash and, running halfway up the bank, thrust her nose among the snow-covered roots of an overhanging tree. "Rabbit," muttered Larry, disgustedly. But it was not a rabbit day for Lady. She scratched and bored her way in, up to her shoulders. Then out she came, with another quail in her mouth!

## "A NACHERAL BORN RETRIEVER"

After that, it was about all the three of us could do to break even with that rusty little pointer bitch. Once, to my embarrassment and sorrow, I failed her. She had brought a bird to me. I reached for it and she dropped it. The quail was still very much alive. The instant it was released, it bounced up and whizzed off into the adjacent thicket like a giant bumblebee. I was so astonished that I never even got my gun up to my shoulder. Needless to say, my associates enjoyed this little *faux pas* immensely. To make a long story short, by the time we got back to our car, the three of us were but one bird up on the erudite little Lady.

That evening, while the cabin was filled with dinner guests, I told the story. Lewis, who had been unable to accompany us owing to a case of illness in his family, was as proud as Punch.

"Doc, I always told you that dog was a nacheral born retriever," he insisted. "Why, she can catch more birds than Larry can shoot." This aroused the ire of the Irishman, who is one of the best shots in the state.

"No ten dogs can catch as many birds as I can shoot," he snorted, wrathfully. "I've got five dollars that says they can't."

I patted Larry on the back and assured him that he was a clinical and histopathological wonder. This always mollifies Larry, probably because he doesn't know exactly what I mean. During dinner, the subject was again broached. Baring County Club folk dearly love a sporting proposition, and before the evening was over, it was decided to put Larry and his old blunderbuss against the McBride pointer in a quail contest.

The next day the going was, if possible, a little worse than the first day. I can honestly say that was the

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hardest I have ever spent in the field. We started late and had to be back early as our train was due at five. All the way out, Lady, as dainty and demure as a little schoolgirl, coyly rested her head against the Judge's flannel shirt-front. I could see that Larry was on his mettle. He stuffed his pet machine gun full of Express loads, and when he snapped one into the chamber, there was a wicked gleam in his eye. God help the poor little birdie that came within range of that old cylinder bored sprinkling-can. But very few came.

Personally, I was not looking for birds to shoot at. I was searching for brush piles, and log jams, and exposed tree roots along sheltered banks. And I found them. Lady at first refused to take me seriously, but at last she appeared to realized that I was her best friend, and after that we were inseparable.

By noon, I was just about exhausted, but Fortune was with us and the score was six to five in favor of the pup.

We were the guests of Mr. Frank Hall and his sister that day, on a big stock farm not far from Edina. Miss Hall is a famous housekeeper and cook, and this time she gave us the works. It reminded me of a harvest-day feed of my youth, plus a Christmas dinner and a Thanksgiving spread, all thrown into one, and maybe we didn't appreciate it! I think the first hot biscuit Judge Reeves swallowed hit the inner soles of his boots. We were just that hungry.

There was still an hour to go. We staggered out of the Hall home, refreshed and grateful, but sleepy and debilitated. I would not have walked a block to shoot a lion. But Lady and Bob had not been invited in, and two hours of rest on the wind-protected back porch, together

## "A NACHERAL BORN RETRIEVER"

with a good drink of fresh water, had greatly improved the physical condition and endurance of both of them. They gracefully hopped over the fence and looked about for new fields to conquer.

It was not until we had almost reached the car, a short distance from the gravel highway, that we again found game. By this time, I was about walked out. Even Lady deserted me. I unloaded my gun before scrambling through a hedge and barb-wire fence, within fifty yards of our Ford. Judge Reeves and Larry were down in the valley. Barney, who had accompanied us that day, with the dogs, was combing out the brush piles and scrub oak thickets on a distant hillside.

The seat of my roomy woolen breeches caught on a barb, and I came near capsizing. As I struggled to free myself, a small flock of badly frightened quail arose from beneath my feet! I tried to be philosophic, but the effort nearly ruptured a blood vessel. They scattered, the majority alighting in a big, heavily-wooded ditch, a few hundred yards ahead of Larry and the Judge. Finally extricating myself, I regained my gun and started back to the valley. I motioned to my friends to join me, and fired a shot to attract the attention of the dogs.

The birds proved very wild. I had one good chance, but muffed the ball. The quail's legs dropped, but it continued in the air, and I lost it. Larry volunteered as beater, and was rewarded with a single bird, his sixth, which tied the score.

At last, we gave up hope, and again started toward the car.

Bob was ahead of us, but where was Lady? We called to her. I retraced my steps and surveyed the terrain. A

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wildly waving tail protruded from a semi-subterranean pile of hedge brush and old stumps.

"Lady, Lady!" I called.

At last she came, crawling up the steep bank. She strode across the rough stubble, her head high in the air, stepping as proudly as any duchess, and in her mouth was a wildly-fluttering but wholly uninjured quail!

## MEXICAN MARLIN

*We shall follow the trail  
From dawn till dusk,  
Where the mighty swordsmen play,  
On their restless run,  
'Neath the burning sun,  
From the Yaqui to Kino Bay.  
—The Swordfisherman.*

TO the majority of salt water anglers, the Gulf of California is *aqua incognita*. For years I had heard of it, and of the wonderful fish it harbors, but I did not know just where to go, or with whom I should get in contact.

One November day, my old friend and brother gun fancier, E. H. Hansen, of Elkhart, Indiana, was in my office. He was on his way home from a business trip to the Pacific Coast. The conversation turned to reels and other tackle for heavy fish. "You should meet Dr. G. Ben Henke, of Ontario, California," he exclaimed. "There is a fisherman for you!" Upon further inquiry, among friends from the Golden State, I found that the Indiana shotgun expert had indeed spoken truly; in fact, in his usual conservative and super-honest fashion, had underrated the abilities of my Ontario colleague.

But hearing of Brother Henke and hearing from Brother Henke were two entirely different propositions. As I once asked him after we had become acquainted, "Didn't your dear mother ever teach you how to write?"

Finally, through the kindly intervention of Bruce Beardsley, of Uplands, I managed to pry him loose from a letter. It seemed that for many years he had been going



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to Guaymas, chasing marlin in the summer months, and sea bass during the winter. I afterward found that he had a speaking acquaintance with practically every adult fish, that is, fish over ten feet long, in the entire Gulf. He had fished the waters from East to West, from Cape San Lucas to the upper reaches, and was as familiar with the eastern coast, from the mouth of the Yaqui River to Kino Bay, opposite Hermosillo, where the swordsmen commonly congregate, as I am with my own back yard.

And when it came to the building of fine rods and the fashioning of flies, he was more than adept, he was an artist, a second Cellini.

Like all anglers, I was impatient to get going, and collect a few of the long nosed beauties at once. But Dr. Henke advised patience. It had taken me three months to extract the letter of information, and February is no time for swordfish in those waters. They arrive early in June and leave for parts unknown late in October.

Dr. Henke told me that he and his long accomplice and friend, Edgar Warren Drew ("Eddie," to me and you), a former Cornell stroke, and undoubtedly the busiest hardware merchant in Southern California (he once sold sixteen tractors in one day!), had planned to spend the last three weeks in June at Guaymas, and he graciously invited me to become a member of their party. He didn't have to ask me twice. He may be a better fisherman than I, but not nearly so quick on the trigger with an Underwood. I was already booked to read a scientific paper in Gotham on the seventh, but by resorting to the use of planes instead of trains, I made it without losing an extra drop of perspiration, and the morning of Monday, June 11, found me in Tucson.

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Empalme, and the adjacent city of Guaymas, are only twelve hours away, but it was the hottest, dustiest, dirtiest twelve hours that I have ever spent on a train outside of Russia.

At Nogales, I was greeted by Dr. Henke's pet railway porter, Felipe Mena, No. 26, who had been instructed by my ever thoughtful host to be on the lookout for a fat, bald-headed doctor with a small mountain of luggage which included half a dozen heavy swordfish rods and three cameras. No. 26 saved me a lot of trouble and worry, as well as money, for he saw that I got honest exchange, at 3.55 pesos to the dollar, a reduced rate, round trip ticket from Nogales, Mexico to Guaymas, and a properly filled out tourist card. A great boy, Felipe, and the sort we seasoned travelers appreciate and love.

Midnight found me at Empalme, red-eyed and sleepless, and half-choked with dust. A most miserable ride. But here my troubles ended. A tall, handsome young chap, his helmet glistening in the moonlight, was at my side the moment my feet hit the station platform. "Dr. Sutton, I presume?" he asked, in the courteous manner of the late Henry M. Stanley. In some respects, I resemble my distinguished friend, George K. Chesterton. If people do not know who I am, they generally ask. Consequently, I was pleased, but not startled. My new acquaintance was Eddie Drew, God bless him, and a moment later I was introduced to one of Sonora's most eminent citizens, and certainly one of the most charming and hospitable gentlemen that it has ever been my good fortune to meet, the Right Honorable Senor Angelo P. Murillo, of Guaymas.

Senor Murillo comes of an old and distinguished family, and he is a fit representative of a noble and aristo-

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cratic line. Afterward, I had the good fortune to meet his brothers, who conduct a large mercantile business in their native city.

Senor Angelo is the manager of the Pan-American Fisheries, and it is to him that all Americans who are so fortunate as to claim his friendship go with their troubles. To us, he frequently proved an angel in fact as well as in name. A most estimable gentleman.

While there are some very attractive hotels in Guaymas, few tropical cities are comfortable in summer. Consequently, Dr. Henke had arranged a sort of base camp at Miramar Beach, six miles out of town. Strange to say, the nights are exquisitely cool, and a blanket is always needed. With Mexican cots, or air mattresses, a blanket or two, and a pillow, one can sleep as comfortably as a king, probably more comfortably than most kings.

John LeRoy Drug, an experienced mining engineer and an old friend of Dr. Henke's, had charge of our commissary. With plentiful amounts of fresh fruit, melons, bananas, ripe figs, mangoes and limes, and the excellent, freshly baked bread, we fared sumptuously. The native fishermen employ crude refrigerators, which consist of large cork lined boxes. Ice is cheap, at the Fisheries plant, and a large cake or two, when carefully tended in one of these simple contraptions, will last two or three days. We found them a blessing, and a very inexpensive blessing, at that. Never, even while encamped at far off Ensenda Grande were we denied iced drinks and fresh fruits.

Charles Bucknell, a young engineer, of Ontario, had accompanied the cruiser, a 24-foot Budda powered swordfish boat, over from Newport. With him on the job,

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and Santiago, a most admirable all-round man, together with Chena, as helpers, we got on splendidly.

The best waters for sailfish lie near, and between, the two lighthouses, just off the coast, within a biscuit's throw of Guaymas. On my first day, we caught two, which weighed 98 and 100 pounds respectively. When possible, we stored our catch at the Pan-American Fisheries ice plant, in order to be able to photograph a goodly collection just prior to our departure. We were able to do this with about one-half of our marlin. On the last day but one, the photographs were made, and the fish, which are excellent eating, immediately cut up and distributed among the poor. In this way, there was no waste of food.

Excellent marlin fishing is to be had along the east coast, and the waters around San Pedro Island, northwest of Guaymas, simply teem with the big fellows. Two currents meet here, and the depth is from 600 to 800 feet. We saw swordfish every time we visited San Pedro. On our poorest day, six were sighted; on the best day, twenty-nine. They were of medium size, from 200 to 400 pounds, but very gamey, and full of ginger. Unfortunately, it is 36 miles from Miramar to San Pedro. One can camp at Ensenada Grande, on the beach, but this is still an hour's run from the swordfish grounds.

Bait is plentiful and easy to procure. We used *sierra* (Spanish mackerel), as a rule, with black skipjacks, of from 4 to 6 pounds, for "teasers." Two of the latter were attached to outriggers, on either side of the boat, a third trailing in the rear. I found them much better than painted wooden decoys. A charging marlin often knocks one off, swallows it—not infrequently tail first,

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as the autopsies disclosed—and comes back for more. The second time, he sometimes gets one with a hook in it.

One evening, about 4:30, Eddie and I were just finishing up a hard day's work. We had arrived at the island about noon, and had caught and landed one big swordsman, and lost a second. Eddie, who has a very melodious voice, was singing his famous little "Come and Catch Me" ditty:

*"Now listen, dear Susie,  
Please do not be choosy,  
But pick up that mullet and go;  
For here come your mother,  
And sister and brother,  
And they all love mullet so."*

I was half-asleep in the chair.

Suddenly, and without warning, a series of veritable waterspouts popped up behind the little boat. Five big marlin had charged our cafeteria! The lateral teasers went first, then the stern teaser, with the huge but graceful silvery monsters leaping and hopping about like mad. My bait was stuck, and, with a bounce, the old leviathan grabbed and swallowed it, right up to the first swivel of the leader.

"I'm on," I yelled, jubilantly.

"I'm on, too," growled Eddie, "And I don't like it a damned bit."

For ten minutes, the free-footed brethren kept step with our captives, and a lively time was enjoyed by all. But I guess Eddie's language must have startled and unnerved them, for he was fighting a 240-pound fish from a belt socket, and when excited he has a perfectly

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marvelous flow of language. At any rate, the three soon left us, and our little pets vainly endeavored to follow them. When they discovered that this was impossible, they acted in a most atrocious manner. I have fought some unruly and ill-mannered fish in my time, but never fish that acted as these did. Chena, the mozo, was a greenhorn. At first he kept poking the long, sharp gaff at me, business end first, pleading with me to "stick him." Finally, after Eddie had rescued the gaff, and kicked Chena in the pants, he became frightened, and at the last, following three hours of blood and perspiration, he became almost hysterical at the thought of bringing the two "diablos" aboard. But we did it, despite their frantic and desperate efforts to escape. During the three hour battle, Eddie circumnavigated my chair exactly seventeen times. What wouldn't I give for a pair of nimble legs like that! We reached camp at 11:30 to find our plump and worried host busily organizing a relief expedition.

The occasion was one well worth immortalizing in verse, so this was promptly done:

*"San Pedro fairly quaked with mirth  
Hilarity was boundless.  
We thought we failed to set our hooks,  
But we found our fears were groundless.*

*"It caught me napping in the chair  
A dreaming of my darlin',  
I scarce had time to yank my line,  
The air was filled with marlin.*

*"With Eddie prancing round and round,  
His rod belt tight and tighter,  
I knew my ballet dancing friend  
Was fastened to a fighter.*

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*"The sun sank down behind the rocks,  
The daylight slowly faded,  
Our brows were wet with honest sweat,  
Our fingers were abraded.*

*"Despite the frightened mozo's wails,  
The handsome pair we boated,  
We nearly died of honest pride,  
Don't ask me if we gloated."*

Next to a double header, fighting a big marlin during a storm, lashed firmly in the chair, but so gastronomically upset that the angler rather hopes that the moorings will part and that he will be bodily dragged into the sea, probably is the greatest thrill.

I tried it, but only once. Next time, I shall cut the line.

Occasionally, one encounters a fish that really wants to fight. The last one that I caught on the present expedition was of that sort. It weighed 340 pounds, and was hooked in a peculiar manner. The fifteen foot, three swivelled, airplane cable leader had caught in its mouth, and the needle-pointed No. 12 Pflueger hook had entered the base of the right front fin. Again and again I brought the big fellow up to the surface, only to have him rip off two or three hundred yards of Jim Richard's special No. 24, and bury himself beneath six or seven hundred feet of nice, blue water. I would bring him up again, and the performance would be repeated. Finally, both the fish and I became impatient. I pulled and yanked on him, as if he were a stubborn Missouri mule. He pounded and hammered at the leader, which was as taut as a fiddle string, with his long bill. Suddenly, the line went fairly slack, and the next instant Eddie yelled "Watch out, here he comes!" With his golf-ball sized

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eyes fairly popping out of his head, with his long torpedo-shaped body quivering with hatred, he charged the boat. The engineer had stepped on the gas; otherwise the planking must have suffered. The point of the powerful bill hit our propeller with a resounding bang, and ten inches of the sword were broken off. I think the shock must have affected the monster's nervous system, for I easily won the battle within the next half hour.

Fish of all kinds abound in these waters—balla, sailfish, beautiful totuava, dolphin, sierra, tuna, pompano, rooster fish, trigger fish, corbina and grouper can be caught by the score. During the winter months, great numbers of huge white sea bass are captured with rod and line.

Mullet grow to a weight of two or three pounds, and are fine table fish as well as excellent bait. Formerly, the Mexicans frequently resorted to the use of dynamite in securing these delectable little fellows. They do not take a bait.

Senor Angelo, who delights in perpetrating innocent practical jokes on his friends, once had the tables turned on him in very unexpected fashion while fishing for mullet. He had invited some distinguished gentlemen to spend the day with him at San Pedro on his beautiful cruiser, the Kommuno. Swordfish bait was to be picked up enroute. When Senor Angelo climbed aboard that morning, he plainly exhibited evidence of having passed a restless night. This should have fore-warned his guests for, while Senor Murillo is a bachelor, he is the most exemplary of men, and he never over-steps the bounds of temperance. I have known him to even refuse beer. His life is a shining example of wisdom and virtue.



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Good mullet territory soon was reached. Senor Angelo staggered over to the tackle box, and extracted a long and formidable looking dynamite cartridge, about the size of a rolling pin. He hiccoughed twice as he tried to light the fuse, a detail which finally was attended to by the most eminent of his visitors, with a gold cigarette lighter. Angelo staggered back, tightly claspig the cartridge. As he hesitated, his guests began to shiver. Dignity and politeness were forgotten. "For God's sake, throw it" two or three of them shouted, practically in unison. I can imagine Senor Murillo's impish chuckle, as the fuse burned close. His hand flew up, struck the awning, and the deadly looking missile fell to the deck, right in the midst of the crowd. The Mexican mind acts quickly, and in this instance there was no appreciable hesitation. Four of the five gentlemen, immaculately dressed and groomed to perfection, frog-leaped into the Gulf and paddled away for dear life. The fifth, who had been raised inland and did not know how to swim, dropped on his knees, loudly supplicating his Creator. Angelo was convulsed with laughter. But the aftermath was not so pleasant. When his moist and bedraggled friends, one by one, clambered back on board, they were considerably upset, and it was only after he had promised to buy each of them a new timepiece, to replace the ones which had been ruined by immersion in salt water, that they forgave him.

Sea lions are numerous around San Pedro, and huge turtles frequent the nearby sandy beaches.

One morning, while we were at Ensenada Grande, we awoke to find a strange sailboat on the beach, and five Mexican sailors asleep beneath a canvas fly, a few yards

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away. Jose, the leader, spoke excellent English, and shortly after six called to pay his respects. He was a Spaniard, and a charming and entertaining young gentleman, a friend of our assistant, Santiago. It seemed that an elderly man in the group, ancient and decrepit, had come into possession of a "treasure map," and for forty-five days, the younger members of the party had cared for and carried the old prophet about, in the hope of discovering the treasure-trove. Unfortunately, about all they had found were rocks and rattle-snakes. Jose drew a map in the sand, showing me exactly where one of the caves was located. It was only an hour from camp and I accepted Jose's invitation to visit it. We found a deep and dark cave, extending far back into the mountain. I held Jose's .30-30 carbine while he investigated the cavern. When I wanted to shoot the snakes, he demurred, "Cartridges are noisy, and also expensive. Let me show you." The efficient manner in which that boy could paralyze a racing rattle-snake with a stone was little short of astounding. If he ever comes to the States, I shall have him meet some of our baseball magnates. There is the making of a great pitcher in Jose. When I suggested that we carry a few of the skulls back to camp, he said, "Why not? Some people are afraid of spirits, but not me. I am a good Catholic. And yet, Senor Doctor, there is no call to take chances. I have yet to go, under sail, to the mouth of the Yaqui, and it might be just as well that these bones remain here until you come again." So we left them.

The question of proper tackle is always one which is of interest to every fisherman. For years, I have used "6-9" on tarpon with uniform success, but when playing with big tuna or swordfish, I like a 24 or 36 line, and

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plenty of it. At Bimini, last March, I lost 1200 feet to a recalcitrant, long-nosed old brute, and since then, I go prepared for trouble. Unfortunately, my brand new, No. 12-0 reel, a New York product, went bad on me, and I was forced to borrow Dr. Henke's 12-0 Stead which ran as smoothly and evenly as a fine watch. Eddie was provided with a No. 9-0, made in Ohio, and before we parted, I managed to get it away from him.

A 9-0, with 1,000 yards of three pounds to the strand, No. 24 linen line, should answer all requirements.

Dr. Henke and Mr. Drew paint their lines each year, after thoroughly washing out all of the salt, with a saturated solution of bee's wax in turpentine. Some of their lines, four or five years old, were still apparently as good as new. A most admirable procedure, for a thousand yards of heavy line is expensive.

Guaymas is a veritable angler's paradise, marlin in summer, sea bass in winter, smaller fish all the year round. A trip to the Gulf of California is well worth the time and trouble of any angler.

## TIGERS

ONLY to the uninitiated is the lion the king of beasts. Under normal conditions a plump and well-nourished monarch of the Kenya plains would scarcely make a good lunch for an Indo-Chinese tiger. All of my life I have wanted to kill one of these big striped cats. But man proposes and God disposes, and it was not until the fall of 1925 that I had an opportunity to meet some of the handsome felines on their native heath. From friends in various parts of the world—Herbert Bradley, David MacKenzie, Curtis King, and particularly Maj. John A. Considine of the United States Army, I had learned that the best tiger shooting in the world was to be found in Annam Province, French Indo-China.

While the shooting in India is fairly good, it is hedged about by so many difficulties that it is hardly worth while. A handsome Tennessee friend of mine, and a famous Nimrod, once took his rifle with him to Calcutta, hoping to get a shot, but he never succeeded in landing even the gun, let alone a tiger.

Thru the courtesy and kindness of his excellency, Sir Esme Howard, K. C. B., the British ambassador to the United States, we secured letters of introduction to various prominent officials in Bengal and in Assam, and when finally we reached Calcutta every courtesy was extended to us. Accompanied by my friend Judge Leonard Waddell of Kansas City, I sailed from Seattle on the President Jefferson early in December. After spending a few days in Japan and at Shanghai we reached Hong-kong on Christmas Day. Here we transferred to a tiny

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Chinese freighter, the Pheum Penh, of the Wo Fat Sing line, bound for Saigon.

Indo-China consists of five provinces—Cochin China, Cambodia, Annam, Laos and Tonking, all of which are directly or indirectly under French rule. The western provinces lie next to Siam, the greater portion being under rice and rubber. The northern territories, Laos and Tonking, are given over to mining and manufacturing. While there is some shooting to be had in Cambodia, Annam, and particularly that part of Annam lying south of the Darlac Range, is the best game country.

The fauna varies from mouse deer to elephant. While the visitor does not encounter the vast herds of wild animals that are so characteristic of Tanganyika and British East Africa, spoor is to be found everywhere. At many points along the Lagna, Donia, Camy and Son Gieng Rivers the muddy banks have been so trampled by elephant, buffalo, banting, saladang and deer that they resemble a Missouri stockyard. I have seen the fresh tracks of as many as five different tigers along the sandy trails within 100 yards of our palm-thatched hut in one morning.

For our white hunter in Indo-China we were so fortunate as to secure Mons. Defosse of Gia Huynh, who undoubtedly is the most skilled and efficient guide in southern Asia.

In India, tigers are shot from machans, or tree nests, over live baits, or by the aid of beaters, both coolies and elephants being employed to scare the game out of the big "nullahs" or wooded ravines. In Indo-China, however, the big cats are shot over dead baits, from ground bomas, in the day time. And this makes the sport one

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which is really worth while. I have shot practically all kinds of animals, in various parts of the world, but there is nothing that gives a thrill comparable with that of working on a 600-pound tiger at 20 feet. Unwounded, the animals seldom charge, consequently there is practically no danger involved. The beasts haunt the game areas, moving from place to place as the deer seek new and fresh pasturage. The country is densely wooded, the jungle being thicker and more impenetrable than that along the Tana and the Uaso Nyrio, or even the banks of the Panuco and Amazon.

There are no hyenas or jackals, and if a bait is concealed in the thick undergrowth, away from the vultures, it will last for several days. The tiger has wonderful vision, and excellent hearing, but his sense of smell is defective, and he may pass within a few feet of a dead buffalo without learning of its presence.

Having discovered fresh spoor, indicating the presence of a tiger in the neighborhood, a buffalo, purchased from the Moi villagers, is led into the nearby jungle, killed, and tied, by means of a wire rope, to a small tree. Within a few feet of the bait, a boma, or hide, is built, of small saplings, tied together with a rattan, and carefully covered with leafy branches. Everything is made ready, for after the "set" is once made, it must not be disturbed. A chain of baits gives much better results than a single one. Every morning, between the hours of 6 and 8, the dead buffalo is visited. Sooner or later, a prowling brute will find it, and, no matter how "high" the meat may be, several pounds of it will be devoured. The rump is the commonest point attacked.

Occasionally one may find a tiger at the bait, but

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generally the beast has departed for a nap in the jungle. The sportsman promptly crawls into the little boma, taking with him his rifle, a canteen full of weak tea, and a venison sandwich. The porters cover up the opening and go noisily away. This is done to convince the tiger that all is well, and that the road is now open for a hearty breakfast. Master Stripes is supposed to be a poor mathematician, and should he be watching he will never notice that while eight men have been in the vicinity of the bait, only seven went away.

Sometimes the brute returns within a few hours; occasionally he waits a day or more, and in a considerable percentage of cases he does not come back at all. Consequently it is largely a waiting game. M. Defosse's recipe for a tiger is, "Patience, a bait and a rifle;" and after a course of two months under his distinguished tutelage I must agree with the master.

When the tiger does come, he approaches so stealthily that the first intimation the watcher has of his presence is a cough, or the crunching of a bone. A hasty glance through the tiny slit in the wall of the boma, and you feel as if your heart was in your throat! I am compelled to wear spectacles, and I always left my shooting glasses on the seat, by my side. By the time I had them adjusted my blood pressure was again at par and I had no difficulty in hitting my tiger on about any desired spot. Defosse always urged us to avoid potting an animal which was facing the boma, the intervening distance being so short that the death spring might land the brute directly on top of the tiny shelter. Inasmuch as the walls of the latter are so thin that a healthy 2-year-old child could throw a peanut through them, the result might prove disastrous to the occupant. But when a heavy rifle is

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used—and I prefer a double .465—this danger is largely obviated. No tiger with an ounce bullet through the head is going to jump very far; he is anchored right there for eternity.

On the present expedition I succeeded in shooting two, a tiger and a tigress, in the mouth, and one just beneath the right eye. A head shot sounds difficult, but when an animal has a cranium almost as big as a bushel basket, and you are shooting with a rest, at 15 feet, it is not at all embarrassing.

I never had recourse to a machan, or tree platform, but once. In this instance the tiger, which proved to be a big male, with a twisted right rear foot, was one of the wariest and most intelligent that M. Defosse had ever encountered. While the Mois spoke of it as a man-eater, its reputation along this line was not very well founded. But it certainly had ravaged the buffalo corrals of the neighboring villages.

Ground bomas proving unreliable, we built a tree platform, about a mile from camp and near the beast's favorite feeding ground. A plump young buffalo was used as decoy. My partner, the Judge, would take the watch on one day and I the next. We went on at 6 and came home at 9 in the evening. To a fisherman or a bridge fiend, fifteen hours is not a long stretch, but when you are camped on a tiny hard-wood shelf, with nothing to keep you company but a voracious regiment of red-headed ants, it is quite some vigil.

After six days of watchful waiting, we concluded that the task was a hopeless one. But oftentimes I have won out at the last minute, and so I decided to stick for one more day. In order to "change my luck," I took with me



## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

the little .30-'06 Hoffman carbine, a miniature but extremely effective weapon, in place of my double Holland and Holland. Major Considine is a warm advocate of rifles of this caliber, and Defosse swears by his 8 mm. Lebel, but I am not a very expert marksman, and if it were not for transportation difficulties, I should probably depend on a tank gun.

I went on watch shortly after 6. Noon finally arrived, and I nibbled on a sandwich and took a pull at my canteen. Four o'clock came, and a big peacock strolled up to the bait, pecking at the cocky little jungle fowl which were enjoying the unwonted repast. I longed to operate on the long-tailed beauty, but higher ideals prevailed. An hour later a bushy-tailed brown stoat appeared on the scene. Six o'clock finally rolled around, and I began to look forward to the trip home. Six-thirty, and dusk, then 7. At eighteen minutes after 7, I heard some heavy animal grunting, and nosing about my pet buffalo, 10 feet below me. I cautiously gazed down between the slats. The animal looked as big as a hay stack. Three days before, I had killed a reddish-brown wolf at a neighboring bait, having mistaken it for a young tiger. The increase in size I ascribed to the magnification of my shooting glasses, but I have never been able to account for the stripes.

I did not want to make another mistake. Just then the big fellow coughed, and doubt gave way to certainty. I poked the slender barrel of the little Hoffman down between the slats, and the ball opened. You never saw a more astonished tiger in all your life. And the more he jumped and bounced and rolled, the oftener I shot. I could take no chances with such minute pellets, and be-

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fore I was through I had used up all the seventeen cartridges I had with me.

At the camp, the boys said it sounded like the second battle of the Marne. When we killed a tiger, we would wait a few minutes and then fire two notification shots, which meant that the animal was dead and all was well. Three meant a wounded tiger, and to approach carefully if at all, and more than three meant trouble and a call for help. So you can imagine the consternation when they heard my fusillade. Defosse, the Judge, and Louis, M. Defosse's fine young son, got there first, and together, all stuffing cartridges into their rifles as they ran, then a long string of Annamites and Mois. But the tiger was dead, very, very dead, and his hide looked like a crocheted table cover.

Indo-China is the easiest country in the world in which to find elephants, but the animals do not run large—from eight to nine thousand pounds—and the ivory is poor.

In India we did our shooting near the northern boundary, along the Matunga River. Here tigers are shot over live baits and by means of "drives." We sometimes put in as many as 400 coolies, Indian laborers from the jute plantations and tea gardens. So far as I could learn, ground, or boma, shooting is unknown in Assam. Jack May, who is a famous shikari, told me that he had killed two of the big felines from the top of an improvised step-ladder, a recent bullock kill being used as a decoy.

While the sport is exciting, and no one could stand and listen to the yells of the beaters, the trumpeting of the elephants and the rattle of the drums and tin pans without a quickened pulse, I do not think it compares in any way with boma shooting in Annam. The English set-

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tlers are wonderful hosts, and a visitor from the States is shown every consideration; but for the sportsman who is used to roughing it, and who is willing to play the game, Indo-China is the premier tiger country of the world.

The question of armament is one which is always open to argument. The world is full of enthusiastic advocates of small bore, high-velocity rifles. A few of these men, like Sutherland, have done much big-game shooting; a few others have had rather limited experience, while the majority are of the library type, and believe everything that they read in a gun catalog.

I do not pretend to put myself in the Sutherland-Selous class, but having owned and used a gun since my eighth year, and being the present proud, but probably foolish, possessor of more than two score representatives of the world's best, I feel that I am at least in position to render an intelligent opinion.

For a skilled and cool-headed marksman like Defosse, an 8 mm. Lebel or a .30 Springfield will answer every requirement. He can hit his game wherever and whenever he pleases. But the majority of us require more muzzle energy. Primarily, one feels safer, and in itself, that steadies the nerves of an amateur. Secondly, few of us care to take a long trip, and spend several thousand dollars, and return empty handed.

My eyesight is not what it once was, and when I shot my third tiger I did not notice a half-inch coki limb which lay athwart the brute's face, a few inches in front of his nose and directly in the line of fire. The 480-grain, soft-nosed bullet sheared through the tough, green bough as if it had been cheese, and not only demolished the an-

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imal's upper front teeth, but loosed up the entire skull cap. Suppose it had been a tiny little 100 or 150-grain bullet, traveling at a high rate of speed?

In deer shooting, I have known such a projectile to be deflected by a twig the size of a knitting needle, and go spinning harmlessly off into space. Think of taking a 20,000-mile trip, getting only one shot, and having an experience of that sort!

Thirdly, it is not good to wound an animal and have it escape, to wander miserably off and be chewed by a hyena or a jackal. African animals particularly are very tenacious of life, and I have seen a Grant's gazelle, little bigger than a goat, go tearing off over the plain with four Springfield bullets through its body and 10 feet of intestines dangling at its heels.

For these reasons I prefer large-bore rifles; one of .318 or larger for animals up to banting and buffalo, and at least .450-400 for buffalo, elephants and the larger carnivora.

On the present expedition we took with us two of the new .375 rifles, a Holland and a Hoffman. For some reason the English rifle did not prove satisfactory, particularly with hard-nosed ammunition, and repeatedly jammed. To me it seemed that the receiver was too short to properly handle the cartridges, although the latter had been made especially for it. The Hoffman was a bit heavy, but it proved a most admirable weapon, and one in which I learned to have absolute confidence. For an all-round rifle the .375 comes nearest to fulfilling all requirements. It has a tremendous punch, and when properly built, a very low trajectory.

In express rifles, for many years I have pinned my

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faith to double English ejectors. I own three—a .577 Westley Richards, a .465 Holland and a .400 Jeffrey. The Westley Richards is a valued helpmate when trailing a wounded elephant or rhino in thick thorn, but it is too heavy for routine use. Many a time I have yearned for a Ford truck upon which to transport it during a long hike. The Jeffrey is a beautiful and efficient little rifle. With 24-inch barrels, it weighs less than 10 pounds. In Annam my shooting partner knocked over an elephant with it at 140 measured (not guessed) yards, a feat which Defosse considered impossible of achievement.

I have had considerable experience with the .465 Holland and Holland, the present rifle being my second of this caliber. With the one I first owned, Mrs. L. E. King, the famous trapshooter of Winona, Minn., afterward killed the largest elephant ever shot by a woman in Africa. This weapon is one in which I place great confidence. With a sandbag rest an expert can put bullet after bullet, from alternate barrels, into a playing card at 100 yards. I consider it the greatest double rifle ever built. The first cost is, of course, considerable, but the resale price is good, and when one is buying life insurance as well as artillery, expense is a minor consideration. For an African big-game hunter, a .465 Holland is about the best of all accident policies.

## THE ERRATIC SAILFISH

**F**AR be it from me, a man born and reared in the short grass country, to pose as an expert on salt-water angling of any sort. But for more than a score of years I have made annual pilgrimages to Texas, Florida, and California, in search of piscatorial thrills, and it may be that a brief summary of my experiences will prove profitable to some of the younger and less sophisticated brethren.

Of all big game fish, the tarpon is undoubtedly the easiest to find, and the least difficult to capture. A week or ten days at any one of the Gulf Coast resorts—Port Aransas, Corpus Christi, Useppa Island, or Fort Myers—between June 1 and November 1, will supply any fisherman with a rich fund of never-to-be-forgotten memories.

Incidentally, the indomitable Silver King is also an excellent warrior for the ambitious sportsman to practice on, and while few of us ever graduate into the O. N. T. cotton-thread class, the size of the 6-9 group (9 thread, 18 pound-test, linen line, and 6-ounce, split bamboo tip) is increasing by leaps and bounds.

Of all the salt-water denizens that I have met, however, none has proved so erratic, temperamental, and intriguing as the sailfish. Unfortunately, my experience has been confined wholly to the long-nosed monsters of the East Florida coast, from Jupiter Light to Key West. If those inhabiting the depths around Catalina Island are any more trying on the nerves and the patience of the angler than these, I beg to be excused.

The sailfish of Florida are beautiful creatures. They measure up to 9 or 10 feet in length, but seldom tip the

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scales at more than 100 pounds. They are wary and athletic fighters, and even when a fish is fairly hooked the chances of successfully boating it seldom are better than 50-50. The hooking process in itself is always a very ticklish proposition, and I should judge that when it comes to feeding successfully a bit of cut bait to one of the snooty old warriors, the chances of the average amateur at his first attempt are about 1 to 50. As a rule, this difficulty is mainly due to a lack of knowledge regarding sailfish psychology, and particularly sailfish dining-room psychology.

The fact must always be borne in mind that sailfish feed entirely on the small fry, particularly mullet, flying fish, and ballyhoo. The eyesight of the big fellows is simply marvelous. I have seen one dash straight at a bait which was trailing through the water fully 100 feet away. When hungry, and in feeding mood, they swim near the surface, keenly on the lookout for a school of overgrown sardines. Apparently the mullet and flying fish realize their danger, and try their best to escape, but the minute a sailfish locates a school, a large number of the little fellows are doomed. On the first dash, the Roman-nosed Goliath makes no effort to feed. Apparently his sole desire is to maim and kill as many of his tiny brethren as possible. The rasp-like bill is a terrible weapon, and following the assault, great numbers of dead and wounded shiners drift out on the waves. The school is quickly broken up and scattered, and the rapier-nosed demon instantly drops back, to feed on the torn bodies of his unfortunate little victims.

Bearing in mind this method of procedure, the experienced sailfisherman does not strike when he feels the rough edge of the fish's bill grate against the bait.

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Instead, he at once throws up the drag lever on his reel, and allows the line to run off freely and smoothly without jerking, until 70 or more feet of it have been unwound. Then, if he is wise, he will snap on the drag, and "feel" or "jig" for his intended victim. When the huge fellow finally does take the bait, the angler must refuse to be hurried, no matter what his inclination, or his blood pressure, for, with a properly manipulated bait, the fish will practically hook itself. One must be constantly on the *qui vive*, however, to see that when the hook is taken, and the swordsman feels the barb, the fish will not gain slack line, and thus be enabled to throw the steel.

Sometimes the fish leaps at once, but in my experience a long run of 50 yards or more generally precedes the first jump. After that, almost anything can happen.

Sailfish strike throughout the year. The greatest numbers are of course taken during the mid-winter months, for it is then that the tourist crop also is reaped and Florida activity is at its height.

The use of kites, a plan which is quite popular on the Pacific Coast, was introduced only recently at Palm Beach, but I am not a kite fan. The procedure is a clumsy one, and in so far as I have been able to observe, not nearly so successful as the older and better known methods.

I have fished with many boatmen, but for practically all of the knowledge of sail-fishing that I really value, I am indebted to Captain P. R. E. Hatton, of West Palm Beach. It was from him that I learned the importance of employing properly-selected and scientifically-trimmed cut bait, and it was he who first impressed upon me the advantage of small, tandem hooks, and of long, light



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(No. 7) wire leaders, and, most valuable of all, it was Captain Hatton who taught me that a light drag, skillfully applied, will conquer any sailfish found on the Florida coast.

Unfortunately, I was a pupil of the old school of salt-water angling. Three decades ago, huge, cumbrous reels, No. 36 (72-pound test) line, No. 10, 11 and 12 hooks, and a 24-ounce rod were the distinguishing marks of the initiated. All of this I have had to unlearn. And the most important bit of information that I have since assimilated is the value of the light drag. The method of progression is reminiscent of our experience with fowling pieces. Many of my older readers were, like myself, reared in the belief that an 8 bore, or at the very least a 34-inch 10 bore, was the ideal duck gun. In the course of years, we came down to heavy 12 bores, then to medium-weight guns of the same gauge, and finally, and with much trepidation, to the present dainty and sportsmanlike little 20s. How many of us would willingly go back to the huge and clumsy old cannons? Very few, I suspect and hope. When one discovers that a light and properly-used drag will ultimately defeat the largest fish, the desire for heavy tackle vanishes.

Spider equipment is not practicable for the average man, but a 6-ounce tip, a small reel, and a 9, 12 or 15-thread line are, and the ease and facility with which one can handle these smaller appliances is a revelation to the uninitiated. The slender and graceful split-bamboo rod feels like a fairy wand, and with practice it can be used almost as effectively.

With respect to the most satisfactory amount of tension, Captain Hatton considers 5 pounds sufficient. Personally, I prefer 8, or even 10. In case the reader

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may think 10 pounds an insufficient amount of resistance for a big fish to fight against, let us consider the matter from another angle. How long do you think even a giant sailfish would enjoy playing hide and seek with a .30-'06 Springfield tied to his chin? Not for very many hours, I suspect. Of course there is always the question of keeping the weight firmly and constantly fixed in place. But that is the angler's task. In fact, that is why most of us are fishermen! For the majority of anglers, it is best to omit the thumb pad altogether. The drag will supply the necessary amount of resistance, and with the pad off, a man is not nearly so likely to thumb the revolving spool heavily, and get a broken line for his pains. After the first dash or two, the swordsman generally calms down, and then one may safely increase the tension a little bit, but my advice is to always keep it under 10 pounds.

My own choice of rods is a one-piece, 5-ounce Musklunge No. 8, with a long reel seat, for accommodating a salt-water reel. The average angler, however, probably will do better with one of the "6-9" salt-water rods, a satisfying and beautiful piece of tackle. Few experienced fishermen have any use for the so-called "jointed rods." These rods are weakest at the point where strength is most needed. Fortunately, the "detachable butt" and long-tip rods, which for all practical purposes are one-piece rods, are at last coming into their own, and I trust that the clumsy, and fragile, old-fashioned, jointed trolling and casting rods soon will be things of the past.

For convenience in transportation, I have for years used a 5½-foot tube, 4 inches in diameter, with capped ends, made for me of vulcanized fibre by the Books Trunk Company. These tubes are very inexpensive, and

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practically everlasting. By carefully padding the rods, the tube can safely be mailed, if desired, from place to place.

Good salt-water reels are not nearly so expensive as they once were, but even now a dependable heavy duty reel will cost \$20 or more. Of the medium-priced reels, I can strongly recommend the "Templar." I consider it about the best value there is to be had. The older and more expensive "Star-drag" reels are extremely durable and reliable, if one is willing and can afford to pay the price asked for them.

Unfortunately, the majority are equipped with wretched little pear-shaped handles, about the size of a petrified wart. Who invented the little monstrosities, God only knows. It certainly was not an experienced angler who had regard for the comfort of his fingers. I have remedied this defect in some of my reels by amputating both tips of the offending crank, and having my gunsmith braze on a supplementary bar carrying two respectably shaped and sized handles. These new mechanical stepchildren do not look very artistic, but they certainly have proved a source of joy and comfort to me, and now, at the end of a long and nerve-racking three-hour battle, I do not feel like throwing my entire outfit into the Atlantic.

Recently, my old and valued friend, Nicholas Hunter, an angler of note, presented me with a new vom Hofe "Bonefish" reel. It is of the B-Ocean type, about 1/0 in size, and has a properly-shaped handle, and a very reliable star, adjustable-tension drag. In a collection of heavy tackle, it looks like a beautiful toy, but, practically, I have found it all that any reasonable man could wish. Filled with 200 yards of Pfleuger special No. 9 sailfish

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line, on a 4 or 6-ounce rod, it is well-nigh perfect, in my opinion.

With respect to lines, I have found all the linen ones good. My only suggestion is that the line be as light as is practicable, and of ample length, from 200 to 400 yards.

Many sailfishermen use single hooks, Nos. 7, 8 or 9, and fresh, full-sized mullet or ballyhoo for bait. I am a great believer in the efficiency of Hatton's tandem hooks (No. 7), and cut bait. The latter may be of bonito or barracuda belly, or one may take a strip, including the tail, from a large mullet. With two anglers in the boat, Captain Hatton always prefers to use one "short bait" and one "long" one. Strange to say, on some days the erratic and temperamental sailfish is very finicky, and when this occurs, the baits are selected and trimmed according to the dictates of His Royal Highness.

As might be expected, artificial lures, and particularly plugs, are not suitable for taking sailfish. The instant their bills strike the plug, they realize that a mistake has been made, and react accordingly.

At every meeting of the small but experienced group of anglers that used to congregate at the Royal Worth Hotel last winter, the question of bait came up. All of us were constantly in search of a more killing lure. But at the end of the season, when we regretfully started home, each of us was as firmly convinced as ever that in dealing with so emotional and eccentric a creature as the sailfish, properly-fashioned strips of cut bait still stand at the head of the list.

## A TRIP TO THE MARVINE LAKES

**M**ODERN trout fishing is largely a matter of localization. He who would enjoy the sport by any route other than "through the library door" must first find his trout, and in these days of rapid and convenient transportation the process is often fraught with pain and difficulty, for practically all of the fish are caught long before the average city man ever hears of them.

For many years I had known of the wonderful trout fishing that was to be had in some of the more inaccessible regions of Colorado, but it was not until after a chance conversation with a charming Denver "Anglo-maniac," Simon Bitterman by name, in the fall of 1919, that I was convinced that the Marvine Lake country, about 50 miles east of Meeker, was the place of my dreams.

My knowledge of trout fishing was in the embryonic stage, but Mr. Bitterman assured me that the essential information was easily acquired; in fact, that the trout were so numerous and so voracious that the majority of Marvine Lake anglers went armed for purposes of self-protection. While I found this statement to be somewhat exaggerated, the more serious portion of my friend's advice proved true, and I shall always feel under obligation to him for his kindness and courtesy.

Meeker is a beautiful and historic little inland town, and may be reached via Rifle on the south, or Craig, the western terminus of the Denver and Salt Lake line, on the north. Inasmuch as we expected to spend a few days with friends at Craig and at Grand Lake (near

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Granby) on our way home, my son and I decided to go in by the northern route. The Denver and Salt Lake Railroad, commonly known as the Moffat Line, is famed for two things—its wonderful scenery, and its chronic and habitual disregard for timetables. The road is two hundred and fifty-five miles long and there is a passenger train each way once daily.

We left Denver early on the morning of July 12, and, after an interesting but rather strenuous journey, dropped off at Craig about two o'clock the next day. We had previously booked stage passage from Craig to Axial, and from Axial to Meeker, so at seven, we were seated on the postoffice steps, prying open our eyes, and languidly awaiting the arrival of our conveyance. Finally, it came, in the form of a big White motor truck, captained by a handsome, genial, old time stager, a Mr. Hamilton, who was a regular walking Encyclopedia Col-oradica. He had spent the greater portion of his life in the state, and appeared to know everything and everybody. My son afterward insisted that he called even the prairie dogs along his route by their first names. His "stage" carried freight as well as mail and passengers, and it was 11 o'clock before we finally got started. I have never seen a truck loaded with so variegated a cargo. In addition to the nine passengers with their luggage, and the mail bags, we carried a thousand feet or so of long pine lumber, a huge assortment of groceries, including several hundred-weight of canned goods, a baby buggy, two cases of bananas, half a dozen kegs of nails, a case of brushes, some spare trunks, three large rubber casings, and at the last minute, a small parlor organ was firmly lashed on behind! Mr. Hamilton prided himself on his ability as a packer, and, believe me, he was a won-

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der! Nearly sixty miles we drove that day, over the rocks and through the sage brush, and so firmly was everything tied on that not even an adjective did we lose in all that time.

At Axial, the headquarters of the Axial Basin Development Company, we disembarked, ate our luncheon, and boarded a nifty little Dodge truck bound for Meeker. That night we stopped at the famous old Meeker Hotel, and made the acquaintance of our host, Mr. R. E. Ball, a typical representative of the best in the West, and a hunter and fisherman of renown.

Mr. Ball possesses a splendid collection of animal trophies, and the hotel lobby is decorated with a beautiful assortment of heads, together with antler chairs, and similar mementoes of the chase.

Early the next morning we hunted up the driver of the Marvine stage, and arranged for further transportation. His named proved to be Carl, and his hospitality was as broad as the blue sky covering the State of Kansas, but his wagon was a tiny gasoline truck, not much bigger than an Italian vegetable cart, and there were four other passengers and half a ton of freight. Only the driver's seat was canopied, and as two of our fellow travelers were women, it was up to us to find accommodations somewhere back of the "steerage." Dick curled himself up on a sack of oatmeal, wrapped one long, sinewy leg around a truck stake, and, as soon as he was firmly anchored, went fast asleep.

Being tall, corpulent and bald, I had to exercise a little more care, but finally landed on the upturned end of a Loose-Wiles cracker container. The fact that the box was made of soft pine was all that saved my life, but my best pair of trousers will carry that "Sunshine"

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imprint on their bosom for the rest of their days. The road was rough, the engine was diseased, and the car overloaded, and that forty-mile drive seemed two hundred before the end was reached. The radiator leaked, and boiled over, and had to be refilled at every second irrigation ditch; the carburetor coughed and sputtered, and the magneto suffered from high blood pressure and cardiac insufficiency, but Carl was good natured and philosophic as well as capable, and smoked countless cigarettes, and told us stories of cars rolling down into canyons (and scrambling the passengers), and of how slippery and dangerous the trail was when wet (and all day long it threatened to rain!), and of how a friend of his was once eaten by a bear, so we got on fairly well.

At Marvine postoffice, Mr. Bitterman met us with his car, and soon we were snugly ensconced in one of the log cabins at Marvine Lodge, a hunting and fishing resort built in the '90s. This beautiful little camp has recently been purchased by a group of men for their own private use.

Arrangements for a guide and for pack animals had already been made, and early the following morning we started up the mountain trail to the Lakes, twelve miles away. In selecting our saddle horses, Dick drew a dark roan horse, Button by name, with a bob-tail and an inordinate appetite for herbage of all sorts, and soon I had to dismount and get the youngster a small club to use as a "persuader." Even with this additional stimulation, "Button" did not prove a very exemplary steed, and several times we had to stop and retrieve him when he had wandered off into the aspens seeking nourishment, much to the discomfiture of his enraged but helpless rider.



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The trail is fairly steep in places, but perfectly safe when the horses are allowed to take their time, and we reached our camping place, at a point between the two lakes, about noon. The guide and cook had not yet arrived, so we unsaddled and picketed our mounts, prepared our tackle, and started out to catch some trout for luncheon.

The lakes are volcanic in origin, and are flanked on either side by huge mountains. Their beds are rocky, and the water is as clear as crystal and extremely cold. One can fish from the banks, or use one of the several improvised rafts, made of pine logs, that have been built at various times by previous visitors. The flies employed are those commonly used in fishing Colorado waters, and sometimes one finds a small terminal spinner, of nickel or of brass, useful. Our first trial was well rewarded, and within an hour the five of us were back at camp, with more than a score of trout.

The fish are of the rainbow variety, and do not run large, from one-half to two pounds, but they are extremely gamey, and of excellent flavor.

After luncheon, we put on our waders and started out to try the water along the shore of the upper lake. By four o'clock we had secured our limit (on two different occasions I caught two fish at one cast), and returned to camp, tired and happy.

The guide had pitched our tent about 20 yards from an old abandoned trapper's cabin, and just back of this was a big snow-bank, at least six feet deep. The improvised refrigerator was a welcome addition to our "kitchen," and in it we kept our fish and the jugs of fresh milk brought up from the Lodge by Tommy, the horse wrangler, every second day.

## A TRIP TO THE MARVINE LAKES

Mr. Bitterman and his son and their friend left for Denver that night, and Dick and Frank Sessions, the cowboy guide, and I were left in possession.

We saw deer almost every day, and elk and bear sign was common. One night a porcupine got into the tent, and scared us out of about two years' growth. Frank insisted that he was after the saddles, and said that porcupines just doted on saddle leather, but we were from Missouri.

Nearly every day we had visitors from Marvine and from other and more distant points, ranchmen or tourists who would ride or walk up for a day's fishing, returning to the valley the same evening. Twenty-four miles of rough mountain trail in one day is a big price to pay for four or five hours of sport, but an enthusiastic disciple of Old Izaak will pay almost anything, provided he gets the fish.

A small hatchery cabin has been built at the outlet of the lower lake, and here the government men come every year to collect spawn for distribution to other, and less densely populated, waters. The outlet fairly teems with trout, but they are wise and wary, and when one tries to feed them on feathers, they simply wink a sophisticated eye and step on the accelerator. I saw a long, lank fellow countryman of von Hindenberg's take several grasshoppers, but the majority of Marvine Lake anglers are keen sportsmen, and scorn bait of this type.

The week we had allotted ourselves for camp life sped quickly by, and all too soon we found ourselves wending our way back down the mountain trail to hot pavements, and skyscrapers, and other appurtenances of modern "civilization." Carl's sage-brush Mercades behaved bet-

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ter on the way back (probably because we coasted most of the way), and on our arrival at Meeker we were so fortunate as to meet Mr. Frank Delaney, the United States District Attorney, who was making a business trip to Craig that afternoon, and who adopted us as his guests for the ride. His twin-six buzzed joyously over the road, and we were piloted safely into the little frontier metropolis long before sunset.

## THE CHIROPRACTIC TARPON

**O**F ALL the big game fish that I have encountered, and few have escaped me, for courage, endurance, and brilliancy of performance, the Silver King heads the list. Fortunately, it is not an edible fish, and for that reason we can hope to have the gallant warrior with us for many decades yet to come.

Port Aransas, Texas, is the tarpon rendezvous of the world, and during the season, from May until November, the silvery giants are always to be found there. While their migratory routes are unknown, they undoubtedly winter in the warm bays on the eastern coasts of Mexico and Central America, and in summer, venture as far north as Jacksonville, Florida. A reliable boatman once told me that he had seen numerous small tarpon in Lake Worth, near Palm Beach, in late December.

On the Texas coast, the big fellows frequent the water alongside the jetties, and love to roll and play and chase mullet in the shallow water along the beaches. Some of the best and most thrilling fishing that I have ever had was close to the sandy shore, near the north jetty at Aransas Pass.

The tarpon has a tough and bony mouth, with sandpaper-like teeth. When hooked, the steel does not injure it in the least, and if carefully gaffed, and gently handled, when released the fish appears to be as good as new. Even if the line is broken, and the hook remains in the jaw, it soon rusts away without inconvenience or ill results to the erstwhile victim.

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The vast majority of experienced anglers use "6-9" tackle, which means a six-ounce split bamboo tip, and a nine thread, 18-pound test linen line. Nearly all of the fish caught are promptly released. As a rule only the neophyte, or some one in search of photographs, brings fish in. When you see a man who has the sides of his boat decorated with half a dozen dead tarpon, you can generally put him down as either a greenhorn, or a fish hog.

The majority of the Texas boats are 24-footers, with Chevrolet or Chrysler engines, neat, fast, and clean. The guides know their business, and are courteous and capable. Competition is keen, and this serves to keep the men on their toes.

For bait, mullet (the little fish that God forgot) and menhaden are employed. A single rigged hook is best. Don Farley, my boatman, and an authority, prefers a 9/0 von Hofe. This may appear small, but for many years I have used no other.

The practice of inducing the fish to "gorge" the baited hook has never been popular in Texas. Trolling is done at slow speed, not over one or one and a half miles per hour, with lures some 50 feet behind the boat, and about 18 inches below the surface. I am a firm believer in fishing with the procession, rather than against it, and if the tarpon are traveling outward, we generally troll out, and run back, to save time.

When it comes to angling, there is no greater joy than that of instruction. In this, I have been fortunate. Every member of my family is a fisherman. I have also had some very distinguished gentlemen as pupils, and while a few have failed to qualify, the majority have acquitted themselves nobly.

## THE CHIROPRACTIC TARPON

For a long time, it was the ambition of a young neighbor of ours, Master Richard George Collett, by name, to catch a tarpon. During the past season, Mrs. Sutton, our son, Dick, and I were booked for a two weeks' stay at Tarpon Inn, Port Aransas, and Richard was our guest. I have never seen a boy who got a greater kick out of anything. Early or late, rain or shine, he was always right on the job. Had I suggested fishing by moonlight, Dicky would have been the first one to arrive at the dock.

He was already an experienced hand with rod and reel, having spent several summers with his father on the Minnesota lakes, but this was his first trial on salt water. He was wonderfully fortunate in the matter of strikes, but apparently the moment the fish saw him, they thought better of it, for they would promptly make a face, and spit the hook out. He lost 18 straight, in this way. To me, it seemed that he never would land one, but ultimately Lady Luck smiled on him, and before he left he had landed not only a "gold button" tarpon, but also a sample of almost everything else, including a kingfish, a shark, and a stingaree, in the entire Gulf.

During the second week, Dr. Rene Gouldner, noted surgeon of Wichita, took the chair vacated by Richard Collett. Dr. Gouldner, who is as happy and vivacious as he is quick and nimble, had never before met a Silver King, but none of them ever found it out. From the way he fed them mullet, flavored with Gallic witticisms, and then whipped them aboard on the end of the rope, one might think he had been born on Mustang Island, and cut his teeth on a marlin spike. He was some fisherman.

During the earlier part of the 1935 season, the water

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along the south jetty was muddy as well as rough, and practically all of the trolling was confined to the north side of the north jetty. At this point the neighboring beach is sandy and low, and for miles one often could see the tarpon leaping and playing, and feeding in the surf. They were generally in groups of three or four, but not infrequently in huge swarms that made indistinct but easily recognizable dark clouds beneath the surface of the water.

Occasionally, one could see a school of from 50 to a hundred or more, milling about in one place. When this occurred, if the boat could successfully be maneuvered up close enough for a plump, fat mullet to be tossed into the middle of the school, quite a bit of excitement might be predicted for all concerned.

Don Farley, my skipper, can handle a light Hoag salt water rod as skillfully as the average American statesman can handle his conscience. Balancing himself on his right great toe, with the ease and abandon of a ballet dancer, he would give the cable built masterpiece a swing that would send the bait spinning more than 150 feet. And he did it with the accuracy and grace of a Kentucky rifleman. He would flip a line out, and hand the rod back to its owner before the poor little popeyed mullet had even hit the water. It is well he did, for many of the baits were met, en route, by the voracious and impatient silvery beauties.

Under ordinary circumstances, when a tarpon is hooked, the other men who are fishing from the boat reel in, but with us, the rules were forgotten. We tried our best to cut our quarries off from the herd, but needs must when the devil drives, and there were times when

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all three of us were fighting fish at the same moment. It was wildly exciting.

The water was about 12 feet deep, and quite clear. Dick was up forward, working his movie camera when not battling a big tarpon, and Dr. Gouldner and I were sitting in the cockpit. I was watching for an opportunity to use my faithful Graflex on a leaping fish. "Look at that bunch!" exclaimed Don, pointing down the beach. To my landlubber eyes there appeared to be a million in the school, circling about, chasing each other's tails, and leaping like a bunch of colts.

We ran up within a few yards and Don cast Dr. Gouldner's bait into the midst of the school. For a second they ceased circling, to fight over the tidbit, then the eminent medico found himself attached to a real athlete. I tried to photograph the first jump, but just then Dick cheerfully announced that he too had a grand-papa in tow. I am but human. I dropped the Graflex and reached for my own rod. By this time, the school was directly alongside, and many of the broad-backed fellows were riding the waves. I flipped the juicy little menhaden which adorned my hook straight at a thick shouldered old bird on my right that looked very hungry. I had read the expectant look on his handsome countenance aright. He was hungry, and he met me more than half way. Up, up, he came, missing the bait, but with mouth agape, and eyes protruding. To me, it seemed that he never would stop. Five feet, eight feet, ten feet out of the water, he soared. Then he was over my head, and momentarily out of sight. I felt a powerful blow on the right side of my neck, and for half a minute was groggy. I heard Gouldner expostulate because I had kicked him so hard, and then, "My God, where



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did you come from?" addressed to the struggling, bouncing five and a half footer in the cockpit, at our feet. Cameras, tackle bags, gaffs, and water jug flew, right and left.

I had often wondered what I should do if a big fish ever leaped into the boat with me. Confidentially, one doesn't do anything. There isn't sufficient time. The thought kept running through my head—the longer it is out of water, the weaker it will get! Dick dropped his rod (and allowed 200 feet of new line to tangle up in the propeller), but instead of speeding to my rescue, picked up his camera and made a picture of his poor old papa, holding his head, with Rene using violent language, and Brer Tarpon playing acrobat on the bottom of the launch.

For months I had been suffering from a stiff and painful neck, which I had attributed to neuritis. Since this "adjustment," my neck is as limber and free from pain as that of any bullsnake you ever met!

What became of the tarpon? What do you suppose? As soon as it quieted down a bit, Don wet his cotton gloves, and then, with the aid of the barbless gaff, gently lifted it up and slid it overboard. It certainly had paid for the buggy ride. As the big fellow again found himself at home, and got gracefully under way, I thought I saw the ghost of a grateful smile illuminate his seamed and case hardened, but aristocratic old face.

## DRIFTING FOR SAILFISH

*Shrive him and bless him, the spawn of a witch,  
Then the hempen cord, and a double hitch,  
And over the side he goes.*

*He may not sink, but he cannot swim,  
And soon we shall see the last of him,  
Though how it will end, who knows?*

—From *Pirate Songs of Old Sonora*.

THE Gulf of California is one of the greatest fishing holes in the world. Both eastern and western coasts are still wild, and sparsely inhabited. Guaymas, on the mainland, and three hundred miles south of the international boundary, is the only city of importance.

High and rocky shore lines, with only an occasional, half-hidden sandy beach rendered these coasts ideal strongholds for the pirates who flourished a century ago, and today visiting sportsmen often encounter parties of native "treasure hunters," in their big "dugout" canoes, equipped with a small supply of fresh water, some jerked turtle meat, a little flour, and the indispensable .30-30 carbine. Hearsay, a legend, or a stained and ragged old map is enough to start a party of this sort off on a long and wearisome cruise. Volunteers are never lacking, although I have yet to meet anyone who ever found anything of value.

The tales that are told of former free-booters are fairly hair-raising. One blood-thirsty old demon who used the beach at Ensenada Grande as a base, had a habit of tying a rope about the middle of his victim, and tow-

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ing them alongside, in a brisk breeze. Ultimately, his men mutinied, and speedily ended his career by administering to him a dose of his own medicine.

I have fished in nearly all parts of the world, but nowhere have I found the denizens of the deep so numerous, hungry, and rebellious to discipline as along the eastern shore of this beautiful body of water. Summer or winter, game fish of some sort always are available. Striped marlin, sailfish, tuna, balla, totuava, dolphin, sierra, pompano, trigger fish, rooster fish, and grouper abound. In 1934, we caught fourteen different varieties in less than that number of days, and all without appreciable effort.

The totuava is the sporting fish in winter, and sailfish and marlin the principal summer visitors. The sailfish arrive early and stay late. The big winds are due in September, and during that month, fishing of all sorts is practically abandoned.

I first learned of the wonderful angling to be had at Guaymas from Dr. G. Ben Henke, of Ontario, California, and it was through him that I met Senor Angelo Murillo, scion of a family widely known in Sonora, in fact, throughout western Mexico. By his numerous friends and admirers, Senor Murillo is considered an angel by nature as well as by name, and we found him not only a skilled sportsman but also one of the most kindly and gracious and generous of men.

During the past summer, a fortnight of my all too brief vacation was spent on the famous tarpon waters at Port Aransas, Texas, playing with the Silver Kings, and it was not until the end of the first week in July that President L. D. Coffman of the University of Minnesota, Dr. John P. Fruit, of William Jewell College, and I met in

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Tucson, Arizona, on our way South. Our first evening was marred by an accident. Dr. Fruit, who is 79, and the dean of salt water anglers, slipped and fell in a hotel bathtub, fracturing four ribs. We had to place him in the hospital. Ten days later, however, he and his surgeon, Dr. Frederick Harper, of Tucson, joined us in Mexico.

The train ride from Tucson to Guaymas is not a restful one, despite the break at Nogales, where one has an opportunity to greet that charming and versatile guardian of the border, Miss Sadye Daniels, of the U. S. Customs. No fishing trip to the West Coast could possibly succeed without Miss Sadye's blessing!

Visitors were never more welcome in Mexico than they are today, and the handsome but stern looking officials on the south side of the gates, bowed and smiled a welcome to us as they checked over our heavy traveling bags, camera cases, and the big bundle of beautiful Hoag swordfish rods. Two of them, who happened to be deep sea fishermen, asked me if they might unpack the split bamboo masterpieces, and have a closer look at them. I not only took out the rods, but also a couple of new reels, a Zane Grey Hardy 16/0, and an Alma Hardy 12/0, for them to fondle, and spin. Anglers are anglers, the world over. Both bowed, and shook hands with us again.

The service from Nogales to Empalme, where one changes to the six mile branch line reaching the fishing territory, is a trifle disconcerting. You take either an air conditioned train, which puts you in at the unearthly hour of 2 A. M., or the "bake oven" special, which arrives about 5 A. M. I prefer the latter. I don't like to have my beauty sleep interrupted.

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About daylight, our train pulled into Empalme, and I heard someone call "Senor Doctor Sutton." It was a Mexican porter, who told me that Senor Angelo Murillo, and another good friend of mine, Senor Carlos Heinicke, the eminent linguist, and dealer in curios, were awaiting us on the other side of the track. Fifteen minutes later, we were in Senor Heinicke's big touring car, en route to our permanent camp at Miramar Beach, six miles west of Guaymas.

A hot breakfast and a cup of strong coffee quickly restored our spirits, and a cheerful visit with Senor Angelo, who assured us that the marlin had never been more numerous or athletic, and with Senor Heinicke, who told me that for weeks he had been saving a stuffed alligator, seven feet long, for my particular delectation, made us feel like schoolboys.

We unpacked our kits, and arranged for the services of a cook—a position later ably filled by Juan, a swarthy pot rustler who was a post graduate expert at boiling black beans and preparing turtle soup. I had allowed an extra day in case of unexpected delay, and we now found ourselves with this bit of spare time on our hands.

One of Senor Angelo's brothers has a boat, a very good boat, which is for hire, and we secured this charming craft for a twelve hours go at our chosen prey. We put in a very busy day, but raised only two fish, both of which I failed to hook. I had promised to show President Coffman "how it was done," a fact which he did not fail to call to my attention, several times thereafter.

On Friday, July 12, the "Pes Espada," a 27-foot Deisel engined cruiser which I had used in 1934, was turned

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over to us. With Johnnie Ramos, a skilled mechanic and engineer, at the wheel, and my old friend Santiago, as man of all work, we felt ready for anything. Northwest of Guaymas, about 15 miles, lie the "Tetas de Cabra," politely referred to as the "Goat Mountain." The best fishing grounds lie between this landmark and San Pedro Island, about 26 miles westward.

San Pedro is the top of a tall, sugar loaf mountain, of volcanic origin. That portion which protrudes above the surface of the water is about three miles long, half a mile wide, and six hundred feet high. Cactus is the sole vegetation, and birds and sea lions the only visible signs of life.

Two currents appear to meet at the north end of the island, and the water is blue and deep. As a marlin rendezvous, I consider it the world's best, and I am no novice. I have seen as many as twenty-nine "surfacing" near it on a single sunny day, and I have never visited it without encountering two or more. Sometimes they will not strike, but during the season they are always there.

In former years the sailfish, which, by the way, are the largest that I have ever seen, commonly frequented the waters lying between the two lighthouses, just outside the harbor. This time, we found them much nearer San Pedro, or between Goat Mountain and Ensenada, a few miles westward. Oftentimes we discovered them resting on the surface, and it was not unusual while circling a sleeping, or leaping fish, to raise one or several behind the baits and teasers. I have never had much success with sailfish or marlin that were first observed leaping, long distances from the boat. Whether they jump in play or in earnest, I do not know, but they travel

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so rapidly that one seldom finds them, or succeeds in bringing them up to the lures.

For bait, we employed very large mullet, caught in long seines, or, preferably, *sierra*, a variety of mackerel, of from four to six pounds. As teasers, we found large skipjacks, sierras, or rooster fish best. The food capacity of a 300 or 400 pound striped marlin is astounding. I have known them to charge a cafeteria of this sort, strip off and swallow both teasers, and then grab a baited hook, probably stealing that fish too, unless the angler is on his toes. They come and go like a whirlwind. On our first day aboard the "Pes Espada," President Coffman had just landed a big sailfish, not far from the north end of San Pedro. I had tossed my bait overboard, preparatory to start trolling again. The impaled sierra was about twenty feet away and ten feet below the surface. I was watching Johnnie and Santiago remove the hook from President Coffman's fish when I discovered that my line was running out.

Long ago, I learned that when in doubt, always consider the prospective prize as big game. I gently lifted the slender Hoag rod from the socket in the gunwhale, eased the drag completely off, and let the line go. There is something about an unknown visitor of this sort that will thrill the most experienced of anglers.

Fifty, one hundred, two hundred feet of line, and still it oozed off. I gently thumbed the spool of the big Hardy, and thought I could feel my friend at the far end "mouthing" and turning the bait. It was a big bait, and I decided to give him plenty of time. The engine was running, and the crew on the *qui vive*. At last I could withstand the suspense no longer. I snapped down the

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drag, and gave him the butt. Once, twice, the big fish surged against the spring of the rod, and I felt the hook go home. I slipped into the chair, and prepared for battle, and I certainly got what I expected. But the old leviathan refused to jump.

"It must be a shark, it must be a shark!" I kept repeating. "'Spada, 'spada," Sanitago insisted. At last the fish took to the air, and I saw it was the biggest marlin that I had ever tied into. Certainly four hundred pounds, probably more. He jumped and he wheeled, he stood on his tail and then on his right ear, and finally he decided to start on what looked like a trans-Pacific tour. The "Pes Espada" is a fine little craft, snug and seaworthy, but speed never was one of her virtues. Six or seven, possibly eight, miles an hour is her limit. We turned our bow in the general direction of the big fish, and Johnnie stepped on the accelerator.

"Faster! Faster!" I shouted, as the spool got smaller and smaller. Far up in the lead we could see His Royal Highness, the wire trace dangling from the left side of his mouth, buck jumping and greyhounding like an Olympic star. "Johnnie, give her the gun, for God's sake, give her the gun," I pleaded. Johnnie was doing his best, and the little "Espada" was doing her best, but compared to that marlin, we were tied to a post.

One thousand, twelve hundred, fifteen hundred feet of line out, the side plates sizzling, and still the long nosed devil refused to slow down. President Coffman counted thirty-one jumps, but a few probably escaped his eagle eye. The pilot wheel on the big reel was screwed down as far as I dared, and at every opportunity I would squeeze in a few extra pounds on the thumb pad. At 1800 feet, I saw we were going to lose unless a mir-



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acle happened, and I clamped down on the thumb brake. I felt the line give, and then sag, and as I glanced up, the big fish again cleared the water.

Sorrowfully, I reeled in. My trace had parted, a swivel having failed to hold. After all, I was rather glad. We had had a wonderful fight, the fish was apparently still in good condition, and it may be that we shall meet again some day. I trust the iron in his system does not interfere with his digestion.

In New Zealand, many marlin are caught while "drifting." One line is equipped with a float, or a small balloon, which is tied twenty-five feet above the hook, the other is let down into the water, directly overside. The engine is then cut off, and the anglers drift with the wind and tide until they are out of the fishing area. They then run back, trolling meanwhile, to their original starting point. When the water is rough or there is a heavy ground swell, this method is a bit hard on the stomach of the unsophisticated, and bitter complaints are heard, but sooner or later, they become accustomed to it, and love it. For three whole days Dr. Harper was rendered hors de combat, but after the third day, whenever I asked him what he would like to do, he would suggest a bit of drifting. When plenty of surfacing fish are available, and they can be induced to bite, trolling is of course to be preferred. But I am of the opinion that one can catch larger and better fish drifting than trolling. The wise old boys are not going to expose themselves to danger unnecessarily.

It was with this idea in view that I made it a point to drift for two or three hours, generally during the luncheon period, every day we were at San Pedro. At first Johnnie and Santiago smiled at the idea, for often we

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caught nothing but balla, a sort of jew fish, or huge sea bass, but the second time we tried the method, I got a very suggestive strike, which turned out well. I was gnawing on a chunk of turtle steak at the time. We harpooned a number of these succulent but exceedingly durable reptiles during our stay at Miramar.

The click sounded a characteristic note, then the line began to go out. Santiago, whose capacity for black beans, in fact for food of any kind, was greater than that of any other human being that I have ever met, pricked up his ears, and actually stopped eating. "Espada, Senor, Espada," he cried. I reached over and loosened the drag, and got ready to do the honors. My preparations were scarcely completed when a big sailfish broke water, not a hundred feet from the boat. Fortunately, the stage was set, and I hooked him as neatly as one would jerk a plug into the mouth of a hungry pickerel.

After that, scarcely a day passed that we did not catch one or more of the big fellows as they strolled along the edge of the escarpment, some fifteen or twenty feet below the surface, in search of their dinners. For some reason, we did not capture a single marlin by this method, possibly because we did not give it a sufficiently thorough trial. In New Zealand one often fishes for days without a strike. But it certainly met with the approval of the Mexican sailfish. And the bigger they were, the harder they fell.

## FISHING ON THE LAST FRONTIER

*"A wise man does not wander.  
I never cared to roam.  
Where the mangrove knees are as high as the trees,  
And the mosquitos as big as bumble bees,  
I make my happy home."*

—*The Hermit of Lostman's River.*

THE Tamiami trail stretches across Southern Florida, from Tampa to Miami, like a long, grey snake.

For miles the road is as straight as the barrel of a gun. The trail traverses some of the wildest country that it has ever been my fortune to see, in any land. When a silver penned writer described this corner of the world as a tropical jungle, extending southward and eastward, through an uncharted territory, peopled only by the last remnants of the once savage but now colorful and friendly Seminoles, I thought he was spoofing, but he wasn't.

The Everglades is America's last frontier, with a little town, on Barron River, as its capital. We reached Everglades City one sunny afternoon in January. For scores of miles we had traveled through an unbroken wilderness, populated only by birds, alligators and an occasional Seminole Indian. These brave and sturdy people, of whom less than six hundred still exist, never surrendered to the United States Government. They retreated into the swamps along the Keys, which they still prefer to the so-called slavery of the white man's civilization.

Through the courtesy of Col. Claus Senghaass, of the Rod and Gun Club, I had an opportunity to visit some of the villages. Snakes and alligators, mosquitos and

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sand flies flourish, and malaria is rampant. No white man could survive. But these copper-colored brethren and their families appear to flourish in such an environment. They were well nourished, happy, and free from disease.

In order to reach one of the villages, my companions and I had to traverse a log runway, of fallen tree trunks, fully two miles long. I am no acrobat, and sport of that sort does not appeal to me a bit. But I could not refuse to follow the leader, who happened to be a tall, distinguished looking and very energetic gentleman, aged 65, from Pittsburgh. His name was A. B. Pruitt. By the time we reached the tiny dry spot on which the spraddle-legged, straw-roofed shelters stood, the little hair that I possess was standing straight up on my head, like the bristles on a toothbrush. "How come you are such an expert at this sort of thing?" I demanded. He grinned, "Structural steel worker for twenty years," he replied. Dr. Grover Cleveland Weil, the fourth member of the party, held up well. But Grover is a young man.

At Everglades City, I met a widely known sportsman and scientist, Victor Brown, and we spent several happy afternoons together. Mr. Brown is a noted taxidermist, and both of the local hotels are decorated with examples of his skill. He is an enthusiastic hunter and fisherman, and all of his spare time is spent in the open. He takes scores of little tarpon, which abound in the canals, on a fly rod. In one day, he has caught as many as forty-six, all of which were released, uninjured.

Dr. J. A. L. Waddell, my companion on the trip, is an eminent bridge engineer. But half a dozen foreign decorations, nearly a score of honorary degrees and the fact that he is an Immortal of the French Academy, appear

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only to stimulate him to greater effort. He plays as hard as he works, and is one of the most energetic as well as versatile human beings that I have ever met.

In 1935, he and his son Leonard, who accompanied me on a tiger expedition to India and Indo-China, in 1925-26, fished with Captain J. Seale, of Sarasota. Dr. Waddell is a good judge of men, and when he wrote that he had chartered Captain Seale's cabin cruiser, the "Graeme," and insisted that I accompany him, he didn't have to ask twice.

Captain Seale and his first mate, "Whitey," had a rough run down the West Coast, but they finally reached the well protected harbor at Everglades. Here we took on our last supplies.

Captain Seale is a former refrigeration engineer, and a graduate of Georgia Tech. "Whitey" had tried a little bit of almost everything. He was born in northern New York, but loves the Florida sunshine, and he spent much of his time tearing around attired only in an ancient pair of duck trousers, and a bright smile. Captain Seale is an experienced and conservative seaman, and both he and the mate were good cooks. We encountered a lot of bad weather, but as nobody could do anything about it, we simply sat tight, and were thankful for the few calm days that the good Lord saw fit to bestow upon us.

On the first day, we ran to Shark River, and anchored there for the night. Lostman's River lies to the north. It has a bad and unsavory reputation, but if it is any wilder or more forbidding than its neighbor to the South, it certainly is bad medicine. Shark River is credited with being marked by something like a thousand islands at its

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mouth, and ten times that many near its source. We got lost, going and coming, and I think we circumnavigated each island at least four times. But the stream is a fascinating one, well worthy of careful study. In ordinary seasons, the place is alive with young tarpon and large black bass. But the recent hurricane must have affected the feeding grounds, for we found few fish of any sort. Alligators were large, fat and plentiful, and we saw freshly used "slides" every few hundred yards.

The second night, we anchored in the "lake," near the headwaters, and early on the following morning, Captain Seale and I took the dinghy and outboard motor, and went on an exploratory expedition. Far up in the swamp, with the dark water lapping against the sides of our boat, huge cranes clumsily flapped their way out through the mangrove thickets, and alligators, big and little, showed up at every turn. It was as wild and eerie a place as I have ever seen. I hooked only one bass, of about ten pounds. It circled a broken tree trunk, and my line parted. Two minutes later, it was cavorting about on its tail, in an earnest effort to throw the lure. I trust the old boy's efforts were rewarded.

This was Captain Seale's fifth voyage to the headwaters. On previous trips, he had always found great numbers of game fish, but we failed to do so. Seale blamed it on the recent hurricane which devastated this area. On the second morning, it was dark and overcast, and we nosed our way out of the lake, and started for the Gulf. By the time we reached the mouth of the river, the sun was out, and the water in the Bay was green and clear.

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We passed Little Shark River and the beacon at noon, with a number of market boats anchored nearby. Shortly afterward, we ran into a huge school of Spanish mackerel. There appeared to be millions of them. We caught a few on light tarpon tackle, but it proved poor sport, our outfits were too ponderous. Fortunately, I had brought some of the new hollow steel bass rods with me, and on these outfits, with plugs, we really got action. By actual count, we caught forty-one mackerel, of from two to five pounds each, in forty minutes. The performance was so interesting and so thrilling, that a few days later I tried to duplicate it on a 15-pound barracuda. All I got that time was a blistered thumb and a broken line.

We anchored for the night near the "fish house," a fish camp not far from Cedar Key. Here our boatman met a number of friends from Sarasota. One of them, Harold Michael, and his partner, had recently brought in nearly a thousand dollars worth of pompano in one day. Such blissful hauls are rare, however. Kingfish were unsaleable and on the day we were there, more than a ton of freshly netted mackerel was brought in, but refused for lack of the ice needed to preserve it. The market fisherman's life is not a happy one.

Not far from Bamboo Key, the next day, we encountered a horde of reckless young jackfish. They were not large, but entirely too big for bass tackle. They hit our spoons with tremendous force for their weight, however, as did also a few blue runners that had apparently lost their way in the multitude and were following the mob.

Just above the viaduct, and in Marathon Channel, we found Cera Mackerel, some of which ran quite large.

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They were less voracious than their Spanish cousins, and traveled in squads rather than regiments.

We decided to make Marathon our base, as the harbor is a convenient and quiet one. The great storm of the previous year took tremendous toll, all the way from Marathon to Matacumbe. Captain Seale, who had spent some time in this neighborhood in 1934 as well as in 1935, said that the settlements were now almost unrecognizable. Pigeon Key, to the west, at one time a prosperous little colony is practically abandoned. Only two or three bridge employees now make their home there.

In the inner harbor at Marathon, we met some neighboring fishermen, Captain Edgar Taylor, of Craig, and his associates, the Roberts brothers. Captain Taylor has been a market fisherman for over fifty years. The storm caught him aboard his boat in Hurricane Creek, a fairly well protected spot. He was unable to escape to the mainland. When the searchers discovered him, he was standing up in the cockpit of his sunken craft, his feet and legs firmly anchored by impedimenta of various sorts, and the water just up to his chin! He acknowledged that it was quite the closest call that he had ever experienced.

At present, there is a ferry connecting Matacumbe, eighty miles by road from Miami, and No Name Key, which is forty miles by highway from Key West. A large and comfortable bus at each end supplies land transportation.

Much of our fishing was along the reef, around Sombrero Light, and about ten miles from Marathon. Here the water is some twenty feet deep, and in clear weather the bottom is plainly visible. And such fishing! We



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were unlucky in the matter of weather, but when the wind did die down for a few hours, we certainly reaped a harvest.

In the nearby Gulf Stream, sailfish are common, and marlin are not unknown, but Dr. Waddell is the sort of chap who craves action. He wanted kingfish and barracuda, amberjack, mackerel, and grouper. We found all of them here, at home, and hungry.

The market fishermen employ crawfish for bait, and use heavy lead sinkers, out in the stream. We stuck with the reef, depending mostly on spoons. We did not get any exceptionally large specimens, three of our best amberjacks averaging sixty pounds apiece. The kings and barracudas ran from twelve to thirty-five, and the groupers, around twenty.

While one can procure gas at Marathon, the supply must be carted down from the little general store, a mile away. At No Name Key, the gas hose is on the dock. Consequently, we got into the habit of spending one night at the ferry terminal, and the next at Marathon.

No Name Key is a rendezvous for sponge fishermen. They live on their boats, which are well constructed, thirty-foot cruisers, and when the water is calm, they run far out into Florida Bay. They work from light skiffs, employing a single stern oar, in a boot jack, as the Bimini natives do. They are skilled and graceful oarsmen, none of their boats are equipped with oarlocks.

The number and multiplicity of household goods carried on some of the sponge craft is astounding. On one, we found a man and his wife and two children, a milch goat and two dogs.

E. F. Roberts, our cicerone, is one of the best crawl-

## FISHING ON THE LAST FRONTIER

fish hunters in all Florida, and we learned much from him. These shellfish are delicious eating, and also make fine bait. They resemble a clawless lobster. We found the smaller ones most palatable.

On a trip of this sort one is bound to encounter some bad weather, and if a perfect boat engine was ever invented, I have yet to find it. With a cabin cruiser as a base, one is free to wander at will, and visit territory that otherwise might remain untouched. The cost is no greater than that of a combination boat and hotel trip, in fact if one played around Miami, fishing in the daytime, and sleeping at a hotel, the expense would be multiplied many times.

One of the greatest drawbacks to an enjoyable vacation in this section of Florida is the mosquito. I found the insects large, hungry and courageous. Specimens midway in size between a humming bird and an English sparrow are common, and they fear neither man nor devil. The natives are immune to them, but visitors are not. On my next cruise, I shall take with me a suit of sheet iron armor. And, as a precautionary measure, for I cannot tell when the spirit will move me, I shall order the suit right now!

## SAILFISH A LA CARTE

*You may talk of tiger shooting,  
And of roping polar bears,  
And of stalking crusty rhinos,  
In their thorny, rocky lairs.*

*But for thrill and stimulation,  
And for ecstasy sublime,  
I will stake my last centavo  
On a sailfish, every time!*

**S**WORDFISH, as found in American waters, are of three varieties: the broadbill of the Pacific; the marlin, commonly a resident of the California suburbs, but occasionally a visitor in the South Atlantic; and the sailfish, the smallest, but undoubtedly the gamiest and most attractive member of the entire swordfish family, which exhibits a preference for the sun-kissed waters of the Florida peninsula. The sailfish shares with the tarpon first place in the affections of the salt water angler who is out after big game. Unfortunately, its habits are such that very few of the fraternity are ever so fortunate as to make its acquaintance. Sophisticated friends with whom I have discussed the matter have invariably declared that one must take into consideration not only the time, the place, and the fish, but Lady Luck as well.

Finally I got in touch with a man who was not only a famous fisherman, but a specialist on sailfish. His advice was: "Wire Colonel Schutt, of Long Key Camp, to secure a guide, and make arrangements for you, and tell him exactly what you want. I'll guarantee that he will serve you a swordfish a la carte, or a sailfish, a la hook, just as you prefer."

## SAILFISH A LA CARTE

January, February and March are the best months, and as my annual struggle with income tax blanks always leaves me in a pitiable state of nerves, I selected a post-combat date, in March. Fortunately, Colonel Schutt was able to take care of us; and at the appointed time I tucked my little wife under my arm and climbed aboard the Florida Limited.

We reached Long Key intact on the morning of the fourth day, and found the little island all that could be desired in the way of an angler's paradise. At the majority of fishing resorts, angling is considered merely a life work. At Long Key it is looked upon as a religion. The majority of the visitors are old and hardened habits, men who return to the club year after year, out of pure love for the sport. More skillful manipulators of the rod and reel I have never met. Woe betide the young enthusiast who pulls up alongside the dock at night with half a ton of fish, the majority of which have been snagged on elephantine tackle! He will not be openly censured, but it will be at least a month before he recovers from a severe case of chronic frostbite. Light rods, and six, nine and twelve-thread lines are the rule, and if you think an eighty-pound sailfish cannot be safely handled on a twelve-pound test line, watch Zane Grey, or Jerlaw, of Chicago, or Van Campen Heilner, or Billy Allen, of Louisville, perform!

The majority of the fish are released as soon as boated, and it is not unusual to see a launch, over which five sailfish flags are floating, brought to dock without a single fish on board.

The swordfish are caught only in the channel, several miles east of the Key. All of the boats are of the cabin type, new and very seaworthy, and Colonel Schutt had

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

reserved for us a capable and experienced guide, Captain Lee Brewer.

To the amateur, the sailfish is somewhat of a problem. Rapacious at times, inquisitive always, occasionally erratic and invariably coy, one is inclined to the belief that the female of the species predominates. Professor Fred Parke, the eminent naturalist, of Bangor, who makes his winter headquarters at Long Key, agreed that this suggestion was a plausible one, worthy of further investigation.

Until recent years, sailfish were supposed to be immune to the blandishments of every known lure, but finally it was discovered that they could sometimes be taken on a thin strip of fresh mullet, trailed on the surface of the water at a fair rate of speed. The fish lie near the top, in the deep channels, singly or in pairs; or, not infrequently, in small schools of from four to five, up to a dozen. Long, slender, and cigar-shaped, with brownish colored backs, elongated noses and powerful tails, they can travel at an almost unbelievable rate of speed, with very little apparent effort. Occasionally one sees them playing, leaping in the air, their shining sides reflecting the sunlight like a polished Damascus blade. As a rule, the sail is kept furled and concealed in the long, narrow groove overlying the spine. Only once have I seen a fish with the beautiful, mottled dorsal fin elevated. Their method of striking is peculiar. Oftentimes the first intimation one has of their proximity is a slender, brownish, shadow-like form, traveling along in the wake of the bait. Occasionally the fish are seen at a distance, and the boatman will then maneuver the launch so as to cross directly in front of the intended victim, similar to the tactics employed at Catalina.

## SAILFISH A LA CARTE

A few seasons back, an artificial bait fan from Philadelphia arrived at Long Key. It was then that the boatmen first met a "Tarporeno." The multiple hooks did not appeal very strongly to the fraternity at the club; but the long, slender, graceful, red-headed doodle-bug bait certainly made a hit with the sailfish. For years they had been waiting for just such a plaything as this to turn up, and at last it had come!

The skipper who chaperoned the representative from the Quaker City told me that the excited fish chased them clear back to the railway bridge. While the grab hooks were *persona non grata*, there could be no objection to the use of the hookless corpse for decoy purposes, and nowadays every boat that goes forth is equipped with a "Tarporeno teaser." The plugs are about eight inches long, with enameled, ivory colored bodies, and bright red heads. When the launch is traveling at a good rate of speed, the plug acts like a demented water beetle that is suffering from an acute attack of paralysis agitans. We proudly christened the one which had been allotted to us "Barbara," in honor of a dear little pink-haired flapper whom we both love very much, and Barbara certainly proved one industrial damsel.

The sailfish swings up behind the decoy and the trailing baits, usually with its eyes focused on the teaser. Finally, it makes a dash for the teaser, and hits it a crack with its bill. It is then, as Mrs. Sutton said, that the angler forgets all that was ever told him, and begins to act on impulse. Despite the good resolutions that you have made, your hair promptly assumes the position of the bristles on a brand new tooth brush, and your blood pressure oscillates around the three hundred mark.

The boatman grabs the bridle rein of the decoy, and

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

as he leads it toward the boat, the excited fishermen dangle their baits in front of the nose of the sailfish. If the latter is a cultured, refined member of the family and a good sport, it courteously takes one of the mullet strips in its mouth, and starts off. Not infrequently, however, you can see a scowl flash over its face, the rapier-like nose is slightly elevated, and it departs for greener fields and pastures new.

But if, D. V., it does take the bait, you release all clutches, drags, brakes and other impedimenta on your reel and sit as still as possible while you watch the big swordsman rip yard after yard of line off the spool. This is the real trial. Finally, the fish stops, half turns, and begins to crush the bait between its jaws. A learned acquaintance insists that this is to break the bones. To me, it looks as if the fish was simply turning the bait preparatory to swallowing it, or, more probably, to spitting it out. It is then, if you still have control of your nervous system, that you strike. If the barb goes home, things immediately begin to happen. Commonly, the startled fish turns about three somersaults, and winds up by walking about a quarter of a mile on the tip of his tail. Then he dives once more, and makes an eighteen hundred foot run around the boat, with two hundred yards of line as a radius, and the jubilant but discomfited angler as a pivot.

The experts use six and nine-thread lines, the amateur, twelve-thread, and the dubs, from eighteen to thirty-six. I had never before snagged a sailfish, and so I went prepared for trouble. When I go duck hunting for sport, pure and simple, I provide myself with a twenty or a twenty-eight gauge shotgun, but when company is expected, and my little wife sends me out after a mess

## SAILFISH A LA CARTE

of ducks or geese, I shoulder my old ten bore Ithaca; and then I know that practically everything within the hundred-yard limit is my meat.

This time, I was rigged out with a heavy rod, a No. 9 reel, and three hundred yards of Ashaway Special. The Better Half was similarly equipped. We swung clear of the dock at eight-thirty, and forty minutes later were abreast of Tennessee buoy. Here Barbara was thrown overboard, and we baited up, and trailed the split mullet alongside the teaser.

"Look, look!" gasped my wife. The lines had hardly straightened out before a long, torpedo-like brown fish came gliding up to Barbara. "Let out more line," admonished the skipper. We did so and then, as he shortened Barbara's tether, we skipped our baits along, on top of the water, right beside our visitor's nose.

The temptation was too great; the big fish hit my mullet a whack with its elongated proboscis, and the next second the tidbit was seized and on its way to parts unknown. To me, it all looked as easy as shooting tadpoles in a bucket. "Let him have it! Let him have it!" gasped the captain. "Now!" he commanded, and I snapped down the drag. Once, twice, I struck, and as the leviathan felt the barb, the water opened up and out he came, anger, astonishment, fear—in fact nearly every emotion except delight pictured on his aesthetic countenance. Mrs. Sutton reeled in her line and settled down to watch the fight. Back and forth, up and down, in and then out, the eight-foot monster surged, now on the water, now beneath it, but always playing the offensive. Once it charged directly at the launch, and I thought of the accident which had befallen a boat on the previous



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day, when it was brought in with four inches of sword-fish bill sticking through the planking.

Sailfish are prone to make long runs, and, for this reason, two or three hundred yards of line is a necessity. If one endeavors to stop a rush too suddenly, the fish is almost invariably snapped off. This is largely due to the peculiar formation of the mouth, and the nature of the labial structures, which are hard and smooth, but fragile.

Through neglect of this precaution, I lost my first fish by fighting it too hard, and, the next day, Mrs. Sutton met with a similar accident.

Not infrequently we would see a whole family of fish, probably quadruplets, or sextuplets, for all were generally of the same size, swimming along, abreast as a rule. This formation was not one calculated to encourage the ambitious angler, for it was seldom that we were able to arouse gustatory interest in any member of the party, no matter how hard either we or Barbara worked.

The waters surrounding Alligator Light are beautiful, and on a calm afternoon one can see the huge multicolored fishes swimming along the rocky shelves beneath. The lighthouse is about fifteen miles from the wharf, and every day we would run out to Tennessee buoy and troll from there to Alligator, eat our luncheon near the lighthouse, and then slowly fish back.

Mrs. Sutton had never caught any deep sea "pan fish," and on our second visit to the light we put on large baits and lead sinkers and trolled over the reefs.

The finny inhabitants were not only at home, but very hungry, and in the course of an hour the lady had secured specimens of six different varieties, barracouta, grouper,

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bonita, dolphin, mutton fish and jack, none of which weighed less than ten pounds. When first removed from the water their colors are resplendent and very beautiful. Professor Parke is the only taxidermist that I have ever met who could reproduce on a mounted specimen the hues of a freshly caught dolphin, and even he is generally too modest with his brush.

On the light tackle angler's list, the bone fish undoubtedly holds first place. Inch for inch and pound for pound, it is probably the gamiest fish that swims. One of its devotees claims that a bonefish the size of a large tarpon could pull a Florida East Coast freight train right into the Gulf. This is probably an exaggeration, but that these mother-of-pearl colored beauties, with their sucker-like mouths and nut cracker jaws, can show some authority when abruptly connected with the free end of a six-thread line, there is little doubt. Bonefish enthusiasts, like Henry Fisher, of New York, Nat Rogers, of Brooklyn, and A. F. Meisselbach, the reel man, vouch for it, and, if anybody knows, they should.

Bonefish angling is too much like a patience contest for the majority of us, however, and only an essayist like K. R. G. Brown can really do it justice. "From early morn till dewey eve he remains, mumchance and goggle-eyed, at his post, heedless alike of the march of time, the fall of empires, or the rise in the cost of living. Only when the long suffering boatman shoos him forth does he go unwillingly home to lie about the big one that just got away. . . . The moral consequences of the fishing habit are too often overlooked. There are three chief categories of misstatements: governmental reports, publishers' puffs, and fish tales. And the worst of these are fish tales, which is natural, since the man who spends

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his leisure sitting on a patch of sand, staring at a patch of water, must, to preserve his reputation for sanity, invent some excuse for it." But I will desist. Some of these days, if I ever catch up with my work, I am going to try for bonefish, myself!

As I look back on the delightful vacation spent at Long Key, my fondest and most fanciful thoughts are of Barbara. Of the whole contingent, she labored most faithfully and uncomplainingly. As one of her sympathetic admirers suggested:

*She worked like a slavey, with never a moan,  
And spent the cold nights, on the deck, all alone;  
Whether the fishes were biting or not,  
Barbara earned all the rest she got.*

I sincerely trust that her demise will be a happy and glorious one. At the very least, she deserves to be swallowed by that iridescent dream creature of Captain Charlie Thompson's, a four-ton hammerhead, or, possibly, by a romantic twelve-foot sailfish.

## MUSKY LUCK

*"Oh Lord, dear Lord, please send us a musky.  
And Lord, dear Lord, make it big and husky,*

*With a broad, flat head, like a crocodile,  
And keen, sharp teeth, like a new-cut file,*

*And a nice, wide tail, like a palm-leaf fan,  
And a smooth, soft belly, like a business man.*

*Oh Lord, dear Lord, I pray to Thee,  
Please send this fish to Brother and me."*

*—Cleo Gaudry's Prayer.*

**T**HE Lake of the Woods, in Ontario, probably contains more muskellunge than are to be found in all other parts of the world put together.

Unfortunately, the Lake of the Woods also contains a tremendous amount of water, and after a long series of summer vacations spent upon its ample bosom, I am forced, chemically speaking, to conclude that as a musky solution it is pretty well diluted.

No matter what time of the year the angler may put in an appearance, his guide assures him that some other time might have been better. Fortunately, the wall-eyes, and the bass, and the big pickerel are always at home and hungry, otherwise the visitor might at times feel a bit despondent and forlorn.

I had long labored under the impression that the big ones bite best at the opening of the season, and as the legal barriers are removed on July 1, a few days after that date, our little party of six started trekking northward.

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Very good fishing is to be had on the western coast, and Charlie Fernstrom, of Flag Island, is a princely host; but the eastern shore is more easily reached, and it is there that one finds the Canadian fishing camp at its best. A chain of excellent resorts extends from Nestor's Falls almost to the town of Rainy River. Green's Camp, near the Falls, is one of the few built on the mainland, an excellent automobile road connecting it directly with Fort Frances, 60 miles away. A Forest Ranger station is also located there. Dalseg's Camp, one of the oldest and best known on the Lake, is situated on a beautiful island nearby. My old friend, Knute Halverson, whom I consider one of the best and most skilled of Canadian guides, is right-hand man at the Dalseg establishment. Clutz, also, whose camp boasts of one of the biggest fish (a 56-pounder) ever brought in on hook and line, is but a biscuit's throw away. Chabot and Hansen are further south, and Cedar Island, Ernest Calvert's headquarters—probably the oldest and most widely known resort on the lake—lies about midway between Hansen's place and Rainy River.

Three members of our group, Frederick Dierks, of Kansas City, a famous bass and tarpon fisherman, my son, Dr. Richard L. Sutton, Jr., and I reached Nestor's Falls at noon on July 13. At Green's Camp, where we hired a motor boat to carry us to our destination, we met a small, chubby, and very attractive little black bear, picketed to a stump out in the Green front yard. He appeared to be both affectionate and playful, as well as a trifle greedy.

That afternoon, we were joined by Dr. Harold N. Cole, of Cleveland, Ohio. A few days later, Senator James A. Reed, of Missouri, who had been delayed by a business

## MUSKY LUCK

matter in Chicago, reported for duty, and Thomas Loffland, of Tulsa, the last member of our little coterie, reached camp on the seventeenth.

Unfortunately, the extremely hot and unseasonable weather of early July had almost wrecked the muskellunge fishing. Day after day we hammered the waters of the weedy little inlets, and curried the reefs in Sabaskong Bay. I love the great outdoors, and when it comes to patience, I am a bearcat (I once spent seventeen days in a tiny grass boma, waiting for a tiger), but those recalcitrant muskellunge nearly wrecked my nervous system. I had started out with Roy Wallenberg, a fine and capable young chap, as guide, but when Senator Reed arrived, I let him have Roy, and, until the return of Cleo Gaudry, a friend and guide of former years, who was away from camp on a canoe trip, Alfred Bourghy paddled my boat. A more industrious waterman never lived, and the two of us certainly laid siege to those battle-scarred old warriors.

Finally, came a cool, overcast day, and about an hour after leaving the dock, while throwing a husky jointed red and white Pikie minnow into a weed patch, I got a strike! It was a "short" one, however, and I had worked the margin a third time before our newly found acquaintance again registered signs of being at home. He came bouncing out of a small bed of musky weeds in a manner that indicated peevishness, anger, reproach, and vengeance, all in one. A twitch of the rod, and he was on. A brief battle, and he was ours. Ten days of hard labor rewarded at last, although the prize was only a 22-pounder, and one which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been released with an admonitory pat on the head.

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Dick, my son, and his guide, Don Coulson, also hooked one that day. Dick's was a huge old fellow, likewise an ardent admirer of white and red cedar Pikie minnows, but the old campaigner succeeded, after an hour of hard work, in outgeneraling his young captors. They thought they had him in deep water, but they didn't. The line became entangled among rocks, and was broken.

The tigers of the inland seas appeared to have heard previously of Dr. Cole, and they feared him. Several came up and looked at him and his handsome guide, Ted Polson, but apparently the physiognomy of the famous Cleveland dermatologist did not appeal to them. He looked entirely too capable. It was not until he had left for home, and Ted was acting as cicerone to a charming and unsophisticated young matron from Milwaukee, that a muskellunge was finally hauled into his boat. The fact that the fish weighed 44 pounds, and was nearly 5 feet long, did not make the rest of us feel happier.

Freddy Dierks devoted his time largely to black bass and beautiful scenery, and as both were plentiful, Fred voted the trip a complete success.

Tom Loffland, who thinks nothing of drilling a dry hole 10,000 feet deep, labored like a speckled wildcat. After the first week, nearly every night he would threaten to start for Winnipeg the next day, but the thrall of the wilderness (and the desire to catch a whale) held him, and he stuck till the bitter end.

The most entertaining visitor of all was the doughty statesman and noted lawyer from Missouri, the Hon. James A. Reed. As fine a sportsman as ever lived, full of magnetism and dynamite, he would swear at the Gargantuan monsters while vainly trying to cajole them

## MUSKY LUCK

from their homes in the cool and placid depth. One evening, at supper, man after man came in with an alibi. All had seen fish, some had felt them, one had fought a 30-pounder for almost an hour, but no fish had reached the ice house.

"Liars, liars, liars!" growled the Senator, bringing his fist down on the table with a bang. "Scratch a fisherman and you find a liar!"

That evening, while he and Roy were combing the reaches of a favorite musky haunt about a mile from camp, a lively and responsive leviathan, the size of a small saw log, with a mouth which bore considerable resemblance to the main entrance of the Mammoth Cave, tried, and finally after an hour's struggle, succeeded in taking the eminent legislator's bait away from him. That evening, the Senator was the last one in. When he reached the cabin, his eyes were shining, and he was as full of pep as a bumble bee. "I saw one, I saw one!" he chuckled. "Big old devil, big as a railroad tie. Had him for an hour. Going back and get him tomorrow."

"Where is that handsome guy who said at the supper table that all fishermen are liars?" I inquired gleefully.

But the man who saved us from the League of Nations only pranced about like a care-free colt, and reiterated, "Get him tomorrow, get him tomorrow."

He didn't get him the next day, but on the next one the big fish was awaiting his arrival, and the first time the red and white "wounded minnow" plug ploughed over the bedroom roof of His Royal Highness, my handsome and distinguished friend found himself with a real job on his hands. The line was a new one; however, the hooks held, the beautiful little "double built" split-bam-



## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

boo rod vibrated and sang like a seasoned steel blade, and an hour later, the Hon. James A. Reed romped into Camp with the musky of his dreams.

My last five days were spent with Cleo Gaudry, one of the finest young chaps, and one of the most capable guides in the Dominion. Much of his spare time is spent dreaming about a beautiful pink-cheeked damoiselle who spends her summers on Cedar Island, but when Cleo fishes, everything else is forgotten, and he certainly understands all about Mr. Muskellunge and his devious ways.

"Rough, broken rocks, and musky weed, there's where you'll find 'em," insists Cleo, and generally Cleo is right. His sunny disposition is a never-to-be-forgotten joy. Even now, I can hear his fresh young voice humming a favorite ditty:

*"A musky sat 'neath a musky weed,  
Looking about for a juicy feed.*

*He saw some pickerel darting by,  
And checked them over, with eager eye.*

*A gay little pike, with pajamas pink,  
Came floating listlessly through the drink;*

*And a tough old jack, with a sneer on his face,  
Scowled as he passed Mr. Musky's place.*

*Just then a plug with a bright red head  
Came bouncing over the musky bed.*

*He was out like a flash, he leaped with vim,  
His jaws snapped shut. It was taps for him."*

## MUSKY LUCK

Chancellor E. H. Lindley, of the University of Kansas, who had Cleo for a boatman in 1930, insists that he is the greatest boy in all Ontario. And not the least enjoyable part of a long vacation spent in the wilderness country is the cheerful and stimulating companionship of a happy lad like that.

## BIG BASS

*Bonnets shinin' in the sun,  
Coots a makin' love,  
Water like a lookin' glass,  
Shows the clouds above.*

*Shiners for the takin',  
Moss on every tree,  
Toil and trouble plumb forgot,  
That's the place for me.*

—Cracker Ballad.

**F**ORTY-EIGHT years ago, I hooked my first black bass. The fact that I failed to land it has always been a source of sorrow and embarrassment to me, but probably had I succeeded, the memory would have been less vivid.

I was raised near a famous river, the Nishnabotna, in northeast Missouri. My father was an angler of the common, or garden, variety, and under his tutelage, I caught my first blue-gill at the tender age of six.

Shortly after my ninth birthday, the family drove over to spend a day on the "Nishna," as we affectionately called it. With a slender willow pole, a bright bobber, and a cotton line, to which was attached a small hook garnished with a fat grasshopper, I fared forth. It seems only yesterday.

Perch were numerous and hungry, and soon I had quite an imposing string. I crept out on an old cottonwood stump, and dropped my bait into the water, between two spreading, bare, grey roots. A second later, I thought a dynamite cartridge had exploded, almost be-

## BIG BASS

neath my feet! The red and black float shot downward with a hiss, the bit of cotton staging parted at the tip of my rod, and almost simultaneously a yellowish brown fish, that looked like Jonah's side-partner to my startled eyes, leaped fully two feet into the air. My line, and the beloved new bobber, swung from the side of its mouth. At the third trial, the "big" fellow threw the hook.

"What kind of a fish was that?" I gasped. One of our hired hands, who had driven us over, and was fishing nearby, drawled, "That was a trout." In Tennessee, where he was born, black bass commonly go by that name. Needless to say, after so thrilling an experience, I set my heart on capturing another "trout" of equal or greater size, but it was nearly twenty years before I had an opportunity to enjoy any really first class bass fishing.

This I found in Minnesota, at Alexandria, and Pine River, and a score of other places, as well as in some of the smaller bodies of water which adjoin the Lake of the Woods. But, like all anglers, I was ambitious to meet a few of the bigger ones. Why monkey around with six or seven pounders when the world contained bass of twice, or even three times, that size? My interest in salt-water angling served only to intensify the desire, and I resolved to make an effort to cross swords with a bass that was really a bass. After much correspondence, I concluded that my best bet was a winter trip to central Florida. And events proved the selection a wise one.

With the charming little city of Eustis as a base, my wife and I investigated the angling possibilities of nearly half a score of lakes in the famous "Orange Belt." It

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is a beautiful country, and a paradise in winter. We were so fortunate as to contact Mr. W. L. Cartwright of Eustis. Not only is Mr. Cartwright an eminent angler and sportsman of note, he is also personally acquainted with everyone worth knowing in that part of the world and he is also familiar with every lake and fishing camp in the territory. As friend and cicerone, it would be hard to find his equal.

In this part of Florida, the visiting angler generally resides at a hotel or boarding house in one of the small towns, and drives out each morning to the lake which he has selected. Apopka is one of the largest and best, but on a windy day, only a submarine could negotiate it. Consequently, when choice of water is under discussion, Old Man Weather generally casts the deciding vote.

The "fishing camps" are not camps at all, but simply stations where boats, bait, and sometimes, guides can be procured. As a rule, the prices are exceedingly reasonable, and in villages such as Eustis, the visitor is extended every courtesy. Overcharging and chiselling, so characteristic of the larger East Coast Florida towns, are refreshingly rare. It is of course advisable to inquire the price of service before placing a big order, but this advice holds good in practically any community.

On some of the larger lakes, time may be saved by renting an outboard motor, or by having the proprietor tow you out to the fishing grounds in the morning and pick you up in the evening. Outboard motors may be rented by the day or week at very reasonable rates in Eustis. Many anglers who fish these waters regularly every winter, year after year, bring their "kickers" South with them, and a few even own skiffs and trailers. This

## BIG BASS

method is particularly convenient when one desires to investigate an obscure or inaccessible lake.

While plugs, flies and similar artificial lures are widely used, the majority of the larger bass are caught on live bait, while still fishing. "Shiners," which are golden-hued, carp-like fish, varying in weight from four ounces to a pound, are the most popular. Unfortunately, at times, it is harder to find shiners than it is to catch bass. I have visited as many as three different camps in one morning before locating a man who could supply suitable bait.

Occasionally, we were driven to fishing for the little fellows, ourselves. With a microscopic hook and a tiny wad of dough for bait, we would wander about among the "bonnets" or giant lily pads, until we found a school of shiners. Taken in the right spirit, it was lots of fun. Mrs. Sutton proved a champion at it. All of the boats are constructed with a small "live box" beneath the middle seat, and the shiners can be kept alive for several days, if need be. When used as bass bait, they are hooked through the lip, or along the base of the dorsal fin. A small sinker is attached to the line. Cork floats are used. When suitable territory is reached, the skiff is anchored, and the hooks baited and thrown over. Some of the shiners are quite athletic and may cause as much commotion as a small bass. The majority are far from courageous, however, and when a giant bronze back looms up on their horizon, they scuttle for shelter, beneath the boat or among the bonnets.

For three days, I fished with the same bait, a large shiner that I called "Bill." After the first trip he appeared to recognize me. I of course handled him very gently, and endeavored to put him to as little trouble and

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inconvenience as possible. Bill was a shiner that could take it. One bright morning at Lake Austin the water was very clear. I happened to glance down at my bait. A small bass, weighing about five pounds, was endeavoring to corner William. The latter bristled up and showed signs of fight. He completely bluffed the five pounder. It did not seem to know what to make of it. Finally, the latter turned up its nose and swam away. I developed so much affection for Bill that I finally iodined the hook wound on his back, and released him in a small pond where there was nothing to bother him. I trust he lives to a hale and hearty old age.

When a bass does decide to stow away a big bait of this sort, patience is the watchword. My wife, who is a born angler and who cut her teeth on a musky spoon, has very little time for fishing of this sort. But, after thirty years of married life, I look upon the matter from a different angle. When the float on my line begins to show signs of ulterior influence, I simply perk up my ears and pray the red gods to do their best for me.

I always feel sympathetic toward a ten or twelve pound fish that is trying to engulf a shiner nearly as long as itself. Apparently the bass feel apologetic, too. Instead of grabbing the tempting gargantuan, and gulping it down, they first give it a careful once-over. Then they start in scaling it. The shiner, if intellectually active, generally objects to this procedure. It makes him suspicious. But the experienced angler bides his time and does not try to set the hook until his quarry is well along with its meal. I must acknowledge that this waiting game is a bit hard on the angler's nervous system, but the reward is well worth all the trouble.

## BIG BASS

Mrs. Sutton and I had been working hard for nearly a week and had caught only three fair sized bass, of about seven pounds each. One day we were on the Oklawaha River near Lake Griffin. A handsome boatman from a nearby camp, who owned the most expensive two year old outboard motor that I have ever seen, had shown us where to anchor and had supplied us with four or five grey headed shiners, each of which was fully ten inches long. Every one of them must have been in its late fifties. He apologized for their size, but they were all he had.

Not far from us, a noted bass fisherman, Harlow Lanphier, of Cleveland, Ohio, and his wife pulled in, and anchored. Mr. Lanphier has been fishing out of Eustis for many years, and every season he catches two or three prize fish.

Shortly after luncheon, I got a bite. From the way my visitor acted, I felt sure it was a monster. After jerking and yanking the poor old shiner around for half an hour, the big boy deserted me. I waited a while, and then slowly drew the bait up, and examined it. Nearly all of the scales had been knocked off, one eye was closed and the poor shiner's heart was beating like a trip hammer. At that moment I heard a delighted shriek. It came from Mrs. Lanphier. Her distinguished husband was just landing the biggest live bass that my poor old eyes had ever beheld. To us, it looked fully four feet long! Its back was as broad as that of a Percheron stallion, and I could have stuck both of my fists down its throat and palpated its tonsils without effort. Mr. Lanphier was as cool as a Spitsbergen winter. It was an old story with him. He sat on the fish—which was as high as the seat—and methodically unpacked his scales, and



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slipped the rubber band from his record book. "How much does it weigh?" Mrs. Sutton and I asked, in unison. "Only fourteen and a quarter," replied Mr. Lanphier. "I thought it would go fifteen, but it won't." And the hero of a hundred battles disconsolately wrapped a wet gunny bag around his noble quarry. The fish was so big that it looked like an old lady with a brown hemp shawl over her shoulders.

Shortly afterward, the Lanphiers departed for Eustis, but the little wife and I stuck until dark, hoping, against hope, that one of the giant's grandchildren would happen along and run into our baits. None did, and we had to return to the hotel empty handed.

On our arrival at the Grand View, the clerk called to us and said that someone had left a package for me. I stepped over to the desk, and nearly fainted. Harlow Lanphier, of Cleveland, Ohio, had delivered that huge bass, with the information that "Dr. Sutton had sent it in!" There's a sportsman for you. I am having the fish mounted, and when I am sober, which is most of the time, I shall always give Mr. Lanphier credit for having caught it.

## LONG RODS FOR TARPON

**P**ORT ARANSAS, TEXAS, is the tarpon capital of the world. For six months in the year, the silvery giants parade up and down the jetties, mill, and leap and play in the surf along the North and South Beaches, and ceaselessly explore the inside flats, from Corpus Christi Bay to the Rockport channel.

When I first began fishing at Aransas Pass, a boatman was a boatman in fact as well as in name. Captain Jim Ellis has "carried" me many a weary mile in a rowboat, along the stone walls which protect the deep waterway. My son caught his first tarpon out of a skiff when he was nine, and, of all the scores that he has since boated, I doubt if another has ever given him the thrill that one did. We used heavy tackle in those days, which made it hard on the fish, but easy on the oarsman. I have often threatened to try it again from a small craft, employing light tackle. But, like the old Arkansas squatter, when the fishing is good, I haven't time, and when it is poor, what would be the use?

As a result, we continue to travel de luxe, and gad about in snappy, little motor boats that are a joy to the eye and a solace to the soul. In fact, I know of few greater pleasures than that of lolling in the cockpit of a trim twenty-four footer, at the end of a perfect day, mentally reviewing the stirring battles of the past twelve eventful hours, while Don Farley, my skipper, and one of the finest boys Texas ever mothered, sends the little craft scudding across the bounding deep like a frightened jack rabbit over a Kansas plain.

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Don has been my guide for fifteen years. He is one of those rare individuals who prefer to accomplish things rather than talk about them. I am a pretty ready conversationalist, so we make a good team.

In stormy weather, when the water along the jetties and the beaches is rough and muddy, the visitor can seek refuge on the flats and in the protected bays, at Murray Reed, Mud Island, and the Drawbridge, not far from the little city of Aransas Pass. At various times, I have enjoyed excellent fishing in all these protected waters.

Occasionally, after hurricanes and similar disturbances, the big fish absolutely refuse to bite. The kingfish and mackerel also are gone, in search of clear water, and the angler must be content with less attractive game.

While staying at Port Aransas, I generally have one or more guests, and, for many years, it has been our custom to select the greenest angler in the lot, and take him stingaree hunting. The sting rays that inhabit this part of the world are of medium size, weighing from 100 to 250 pounds. Their whip-like tails are capable of inflicting severe wounds, and I have known mullet fishermen who landed in a hospital as a result of an encounter with a stingaree.

Probably the best-known expert on sting rays and pan fish in southern Texas is "Florida" Roberts, of Port Aransas. I have known and admired Roberts for a long time, and when I hear anyone who is in search of a mixed bag inquiring for a guide, I always recommend "Florida." Roberts is a great believer in chumming. For chum, he generally employs crushed shrimp, and

## LONG RODS FOR TARPON

similar piscatorial tidbits. He prefers to anchor his stalwart old craft, the "Fish Hound," and still-fish for his quarry. Rare and startling are some of the cargoes that he brings in.

One afternoon, four of us caught nine sting rays, a drum so big that it had to be returned to the water, a small sea bass, eleven sharks, and forty-seven salt-water catfish. It was the most imposing array of trophies that I have ever seen landed on Barney's Wharf. But the anglers, who consisted of Chancellor E. H. Lindley, of the University of Kansas, Justin D. Bowersock, famed Nimrod and aviation writer, Dick Collett, a student from Choate, and myself, were not ashamed. We had spent a busy and delightful afternoon, been rained on six times, broken five rods, and had not lost a cent playing poker. Why shouldn't we be happy?

While tarpon frequent this part of the Texas coast throughout the summer, June has always been my lucky month at Mustang Island, the narrow strip of sand on which the city of Port Aransas is built. At this time of the year, the graceful giants are working their way eastward and northward. Frequently they travel in great schools. I have seen them so thick in the water that it looked as if one could walk ashore on their backs. Smaller schools dash about in the shallow water along the beaches. Some appear to be chasing mullet, but the majority, like the average hitch-hiker, are just traveling.

If you start out deliberately to overtake an aggregation of this sort, the tarpon quickly become frigheened and panicky. The school is broken up, and no more surface fish are to be seen. As a rule, they travel slowly. By making a wide detour, you can circle them, and get ahead of the procession. Then, with the engine throttled down

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to the usual trolling speed of a mile or a mile and a half an hour, the anglers await the arrival of the caravan. The result certainly is worth the trouble! I have fished a great deal, in all parts of the world, and for practically all sorts of fish, and, in my opinion, the Silver King, for pure sport, and the joy of battle, is the most worthy antagonist of all. The fish is so clean, and beautiful, and vigorous that everyone admires it. When it is hooked, the ensuing battle is one long to be remembered.

In earlier life, I did a great deal of shooting. I have often been asked which gave me the greater thrill, hooking a big game fish, or killing an elephant or rhino. Of the two, I much prefer the excitement of fishing. In hunting, when you pull the trigger, the fun usually is ended. Your quarry either is safely anchored, or has escaped. But in fishing, the strike is only the beginning; the greater part of the fun is yet to come. It is almost as if you should turn a hungry boy loose in an ice-cream parlor, and tell him to help himself. That's the way a tarpon fisherman feels at Port Aransas in June.

For many years, I have experimented with salt-water fishing tackle of various sorts. The old-fashioned rods, stiff, heavy and cumbersome, soon were cast aside. In Texas, it is not considered good manners to kill your fish, or to bring it in, unless you are fishing during the annual rodeo competitions, when the judges must pass on the size and weight of the catch. Fully eighty per cent of the tarpon captured at other times are released, uninjured.

This is one feature of the tarpon which makes fishing for it so enjoyable. The hook is not swallowed, but lodges in the tough cartilage of the lips or cheek. Even though the line may break, the fish soon rids itself of the of-

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fending steel. Personally, I am a great believer in the use of barbless 9/0 hooks, which I fashion myself by filing off the barb. In the surf, where an angler is fortunate if he lands one fish out of five that are "jumped," these slender-pointed hooks penetrate better, and give superior results. After the fish is boated, the guide can often shake it off, or allow it to shake itself off, without even touching it.

As I grew older and more experienced, I adopted lighter and lighter tackle. In fact, as I now look back, some of it was entirely too light. With my old friend Hayes, of San Antonio, I used to battle a big, pot-bellied six-footer for two or three hours on a spidery three-six outfit, only to lose the prize to a hungry shark at last. Following the suggestion of another fishing pal, I tried the fly rod, but with indifferent success. The general run of tarpon have very little use for a hook of any sort. Anglers who have played with them on spoons and artificial baits of other kinds will recognize this fact. As my eminent fishing partner, Chancellor Lindley, once remarked, "they can spit over a box car," and many of them delight in doing it. With a fly rod, it is difficult to set a hook. Consequently, the majority of the tarpon that I succeeded in "catching" didn't remain caught for long. To quote a fine old German, with whom I once fished in the Panuco River, at Tampico, they promptly "coughed up the hook, and wented."

What an angler desires in a rod is suppleness, and elasticity, with sufficient length to give him complete control of the battle. That is one reason why we took to six-nine and similar tackle.

Col. Frank Hodges, who spent the first week with me at Port Aransas on my last trip, started out with a twenty-

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four ounce tip, dropped to a sixteen-ounce, and, before his vacation ended, became one of the most confirmed of light-tackle enthusiasts. Unfortunately, light tackle of good quality, particularly if the angler is a neophyte, is likely to prove expensive. Even a veteran will crack a few split-bamboos each season. I am pretty good at putting a permanent wave in a \$40 rod myself, while some of my high-powered brethren, like Tom Loffland, of Tulsa, will average a broken rod a day.

Last year, Tom flew in to spend a few days with us. Shortly afterward, I saw a second plane drop down on the landing field. "Why the extra plane?" I asked.

"Poles," replied Tom. In reality, the plane contained some more Tulsans, but if it had been rods, Tom could have used them.

It was my old friend, Dr. J. A. L. Waddell, who first introduced me to Calcutta bamboo as a sporting proposition. Much of Dr. Waddell's life has been spent on foreign frontiers, and he long ago learned that, when he needed anything, he frequently had to make it himself. He had devised two medium-weight salt-water outfits. The rods consisted of nine-foot Calcutta bamboo rods, fitted with locking reel bands. The hand grips were padded with cotton bandage, held in place with tire tape. Last year, we spent a couple of months together, in Florida, and the fun he got out of those battered, old rods was astonishing. He simply could not break them.

On my last trip to Texas, the fish did their part, but, in the matter of rods, ill luck pursued me. If the old saying were altered to "a rod a day makes the doctor feel gay," I should certainly have been as happy as a Negro in a watermelon patch. But "several rods a day

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and the devil's to pay" would have been more appropriate. The second afternoon, I snapped a beautiful, hand-built rod belonging to my wife, broke it off just above the reel seat. Had I borrowed it with her permission, my predicament would have been bad enough, but, as she was in California when I left home, any sportsman can appreciate my discomfiture when I found myself hanging on to only the butt.

A few days later, while visiting Mr. and Mrs. William Bland, at the general store, I spoke of the trouble we were having with rods. "Try this one!" suggested Mrs. Bland, and she reached back of the counter, and unearthed a discolored, old nine-foot Calcutta bamboo, which was fitted with a fine handle and reel seat. "If you break it, bring in the pieces, and I'll give you back your \$2," she laughingly added.

I caught four tarpon on that rod the first forenoon, and, throughout the rest of the trip, it was considered the lucky rod in our boat. The rod looked like an old-fashioned grass sickle, but my sister-in-law, a natural-born angler, who is but little bigger than one of the Dionne quintuplets, landed a thirty-pound ling on it in five minutes, and, the same afternoon, brought to gaff a five-and-a-half foot tarpon in less than ten minutes. Twenty-four hours later, Sammy Neel snapped a pair of leviathans into the branding chute with it. It was simply suicide for a fish to look at that half-moon antique.

Following the advice of a prominent reel maker, I never tried to straighten it. As a result, I came near losing it off the dock one day. I had left it hanging against the wall, outside Barney's Place. Some one accidentally knocked it over, and it was so crooked that I thought it



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was going to crawl off the platform. I discovered its intentions just in time. After that, when I went to luncheon, I tied it to a nail, just to take no chance.

A few days later, at Tarpon Inn, I found another old bamboo, which we fixed up and used, and, near the end of the second week, I located a new, and quite well-furnished one, at the sporting goods store. These three rods, used alongside our most expensive split-bamboos, gave us so much pleasure and satisfaction that never again will I be without a generous supply.

Recently I decided to fight a tarpon on a real fish pole, a sixteen-foot jointed-bamboo I had once purchased for use in Florida. This rod was a bit "muzzle heavy," and not particularly graceful. If you are an aesthete, don't trifle with it. But it possesses a lot of backbone, and, if you are red-blooded, and nimble-footed (or, better, if you have a boatman who is), and have a sense of humor, don't miss it.

My first fish was a slender male, around five feet, eleven inches in length, and quite athletic. I hooked him neatly through the upper lip, one sunny morning. During the next hour, Frank Hodges, Don Farley, and I fought that fish all over the northwest corner of the Gulf of Mexico. He did everything but climb trees. The rod stood up beautifully. I had on 900 feet of No. 12 line, and we had no worry from that source. But the hook was a barbless one, and we had to guard against slack line, and sharks, and shrimp boats, and the jetty rocks, and divers other things. We finally boated the old boy by running the butt of the rod through the windshield opening, and hand-lining our quarry in. It was a great battle. Don did most of the work. I handled the boat. Frank constituted the advisory board.

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Our next, and last, fish on this outfit was a trifle more than six feet long, and somewhat resembled an oversized, nickel-plated saw log. Chancellor Lindley did the honors. As the leviathan felt the hook, and took to the air, the chancellor muttered "Great Scott, did you see how I yanked that fish out of the water!" It was a real feat.

This time, Don was called to bat a little earlier. I have great confidence in Don. He is one of the best dancers in Nueces County, and that acrobat certainly took him down the line! Much of the battle was fought from the forward deck, although the big fellow twice ran under the boat. This is a difficult maneuver to combat when you are manipulating a pole nearly six yards long. But Don did it, expertly, gracefully, and artistically. An hour and twenty minutes of strenuous exercise, and we were in position to bid our handsome acquaintance farewell.

The fishing we enjoyed on that trip was as fine as any I have ever had, and it gave us a splendid opportunity to try out what must surely have been one of the most unusual collections of fishing rods ever seen in those parts. As far as I was concerned, the strange variety in our tackle was one of the interesting aspects of the whole expedition, and I got a quiet sort of pleasure myself out of seeing how well the old battle-axes compared with some of our more modern tackle. I thought Don did, too.

But the next day, as I started to hand the sixteen-foot masterpiece aboard, Don said, "Doctor, if you don't mind, let's just leave that damned flagpole at home!"

## HORSE MACKEREL

**O**UT in the Middle West, August is the hottest month of the year. If a Missouri angler is not a victim of hay fever, he can always use the weather as an excuse for leaving home.

Fortunately, August is also tuna time, at Liverpool and Wedgeport. For many years, two of my friends, Zane Grey and Dr. J. A. L. Waddell, have lectured me on the merits of the Nova Scotia tuna. Unfortunately, I am old, conservative, and rheumatic, and it was not until I learned that one might find broadbill as well as "horse mackerel" in the Bluenose country that I was completely sold on the proposition. My little wife proved even more skeptical, for she has been my companion on many a wild goose chase, but when she discovered that the promised land abounded in hooked rugs and blueberries as well as big fish, she capitulated.

Three of our good friends, Colonel and Mrs. Frank Hodges, and their charming young daughter, Jessie, completed the party.

Our first stop was at Hubbards. Here we found an old and excellent eating house, the proprietor of which knew fully as much about tuna fishing with rod and reel as the average Wanderobo tracker knows about a Diesel engine. He had procured for us a couple of local fishermen as guides, fine and reliable men, but as ignorant of this particular form of sport as he was. They had harpooned fish of this sort, and let them drag out their lives on ponderous barrel floats, but when it came to challenging the big fellows to battle on an equal footing, they were completely and happily at sea. After wasting

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three days of valuable time at St. Margaret's Bay, Colonel Hodges and I decided to go to Louisburg, to test the hospitality of the broadbills.

While these aristocrats also refused to give us a bite, nevertheless we had a wonderfully good time, and met some fine people. Louisburg is one of the oldest cities in Nova Scotia. It is reached by way of rail to Sydney, and bus to the east coast. Michael Lerner, sterling sportsman and gentleman, had been there for three weeks, and had caught three swordfish, one of which weighed more than six hundred pounds. Mr. Lerner had succeeded in interesting not only the Canadian Government, but also the American Museum of Natural History in the project, and Miss LaMonte and her assistants were carefully working up the material as fast as Mr. Lerner brought it ashore. Unfortunately, it didn't come ashore very fast. Three weeks later, the score was unchanged.

Louisburg is the port of call for the swordfish fleet, in August. The beautiful giants work their way up to the tip of the Cape, or into Glace Bay, and then turn back. The greater number stop at Louisburg on their way north. On the return trip, some of them must "cut corners", as our skipper assured us that they were far less numerous at that time. We found the little Inn at Louisburg a charming hostelry. Our guides, Captain Dan Fleet, and his two sons, were all that one could ask in the way of boatmen, and the cruiser, a new forty-footer, with twin marine engines, was neat, clean, and fast.

Louisburg is the capital of the swordfishing industry. At the height of the season, a hundred "harpooners" go out of the little Bay every morning. They hail from a dozen ports—Boston, Plymouth and Portland, Prince Rupert's, Lunenburg, Chester, Glace Bay, St. John's, all

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are represented. While I do not approve of this manner of taking a fine sporting fish like the broadbill, some of these men get a lot of pleasure out of it. Many of them do not make enough to break even on their gasoline bills, and yet they return, year after year, to spend a month or more in the "fleet". A boat is generally manned by three or four fishermen. The mainmast is equipped with foot holds, and all day long you can see one or two sailors clinging on the tiny little crossboard, thirty or forty feet above the deck. Many of the boats have a supplementary steering wheel high up on the mast. When the time for action approaches, the "Lookout" steers the ship, and the harpooner runs forward, to the bow, and takes his place in the "pulpit", weapon in hand. The blade of the harpoon is of non-corrosive metal, and is fitted loosely to the tip of the long shaft. The line is of small but strong tarred rope, about 80 fathoms long, and is coiled about a small barrel, which lies in a rack, well forward. While "surfacing", the big fish appear to be dozing, and the boat silently creeps up behind them. A fraction of a second later, the harpoon shoots downward, the barrel is tossed into the sea, and the magnificent swordsman begins a long and strenuous battle which is sure to end disastrously for him. If the "fishing" is good, and broadbills numerous, a single boat may have as many as three kegs out at one time. When the victim is exhausted, a dory is dropped over the side, and the dead or dying swordfish slowly worked up to the surface, and salvaged. I have seen as many as one hundred broadbills lying on the market dock at Louisburg in one evening.

To a rod and reel enthusiast, the sight is a pitiable one, but men must eat, and the broadbill harvest means much to families that depend on the sea for a livelihood.

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Finer folk than these sturdy Cape Breton men I have never seen. Clean, honest, brave, industrious, God-fearing and law abiding, independent, kindly, and generous, it is a joy to have known them.

During the six days we spent at Louisburg, we saw five surfacing broadbills. Only one of these, a huge old leviathan that looked to be fully fourteen feet long, appeared to be interested in what we had to offer. Just as we got the gentleman lined up, a cocky harpooner swooped down upon us, the steersman with an "Ethics be damned" expression on his face, and our only chance vanished beneath the waves. Captain Fleet apologetically assured us that it was not a local boat, but, under any circumstances, it was a rotten thing for any man to do. Two of the fish that we saw had long harpoon wounds on their sides. They looked like Crusaders newly returned from the Holy Wars. Needless to say, they were also very conservative, and recognized our intrusion only by a slight elevation of the nose, and prompt but dignified withdrawal from the field. Michael Lerner told me that if one out of six paid any attention to the bait, the angler was fortunate.

Bad weather and Sunday arriving at the same time, Colonel Hodges and I decided to return south. After a few delightful hours at the "Isle Royale", the most charming caravansary on the Island, we entrained for Halifax and Liverpool. At Hubbards, our families joined us, on the train, and two hours later, we were ensconced at the Hotel Mersey, under the hospitable wing of Mr. J. V. Butler, himself a big game hunter and fisherman, who proved the host par excellence. Never have I had better service.

A number of well known anglers had preceded us,

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among them being Mr. and Mrs. Kip Farrington, of New York. "Kip", as everyone affectionately and admiringly calls him, is to the tuna world what Ernest Hemingway is to the marlin fraternity, although I believe that Ernest is a small percentage up on Kip when it comes to beauty. But an iridescent lumberjack shirt, with the tail flying in the breeze, and a pair of huge sea boots undoubtedly are in Kip's favor, and tend to even the score. All that was needed was a cocked hat and a cutlass to convince an outlander that Captain Barss or old Sylvanus Cobb in person was again haunting the long walk of Liverpool. I am indebted to this fine sportsman for much valuable information, and also for two new and splendid five yard traces, of stainless steel cable. My swordfish leaders were entirely too light for tuna, at least such tuna as I encountered.

Mr. Farrington is one of the most expert and indefatigable anglers that I have ever met. And Mrs. Farrington, her slender, girlish figure almost hidden in voluminous oilskins, topped by a big "sou'wester", is not far behind her distinguished husband. On her last day of the year at Liverpool, she fought a six hundred pound fish for fourteen hours out of a dory, and triumphed. Think of conquering a game fish five times as big as oneself, and every ounce a warrior! It was magnificent.

At Wedgeport, the tuna arrive in mixed schools, and one can never tell just what will come out of the "grab bag." It may be a four hundred pounder, but more probably a little fellow, well under a hundredweight. At Liverpool and Jurden Bay, these are contemptuously referred to as "bait fish". But, trolling along the tide rip at Wedgeport undoubtedly has its joys and remunerations.

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At Liverpool, the chase is confined to the region of the herring nets. Just as, in Indo China, the grass follows the rain, the Herbivora the grass, and the tiger the deer, so in Nova Scotia, the herring follow their food supply, which appears to be a tiny shrimp-like creature, occurring in huge schools, and the tuna follow the herring.

Early in August, Liverpool Bay is crisscrossed with scores of herring nets. These are of the gill type, and four or five hundred feet long. The anchor ropes, at the ends, are attached to floats. The nets are about fifteen feet deep, and the water, approximately twelve fathoms.

The nets are "lifted" early each morning, about four or five o'clock, and the tuna seem to know this. A five hundred pounder is considered a small fish in this Bay, and hardly worth the trouble of catching. A man who lands one of the little fellows never brags about it. When congratulated, it is good form to shrug your shoulders, and say, deprecatingly, "Oh, just a baby, a tiny little fellow. Only five hundred and forty-three pounds."

My handsome associate, Colonel Hodges, landed a beautiful one, of nearly six hundred pounds, on his fourth day. It put up a splendid fight, but he is still apologizing for its size, or lack of size.

In order to catch one of these piscatorial masterpieces, you must be on hand before the herring fishermen arrive. This means a three-thirty call, with a four o'clock breakfast (God bless that dear little volunteer chef at The Mersey!).

As boatman, Mrs. Sutton and I drew Captain Lance Nickerson, as a fine a boy as ever had lined a horse mackerel, with Clarence Houghler as first mate. Their



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boat, a trim thirty-six footer, was owned by "Commodore" Penney, who is almost an institution in Liverpool.

We would reach the dock shortly after four, and five minutes later were cutting our way through the fog toward the herring nets, two miles out. Here we would pick up three bushels of herring, at the enormous expenditure of one dollar. A location is quickly selected, and the cruiser moored. It is either tied to a net or anchor float, or, if the boat's anchor is thrown over, a float is attached to the cable, so it may be recovered in case it has to be cut. Herring are used for bait, the hook being passed from the middle of the spine forward, with the tip just showing, between the shoulders. A small cord is then run through the eye of the hook, and around the body of the herring, and tied, to hold the shank down. The herring is taken head first, and when hooked in this manner, will not tickle the tuna's throat. An old and experienced tuna does not like to have his tonsils scratched with a 14/0 hook. For a "bobber", a large piece of cork, or a glass seine float, is used. It is tied to the line, fifteen or twenty feet above the bait, with a bit of light cord.

The visitors generally arrive singly. This is fortunate, for a double header on Liverpool tuna certainly would spell disaster. But if two or three do happen to arrive together, it makes it more interesting for all concerned. There is nothing like competition to stir up business. Finally, someone shouts "There's one!" A big swirl marks the temporary location of H. R. H. At once every boatman in the vicinity begins to toss herring to the visitor. "He's been here before!", or "He's tame!" one of the boys will say, and, to prove it, the gargantuan fish will rest for a moment, almost directly beneath the boat, and

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but a few feet down. Sometimes the fish act like spoiled children. They will come and go, appear and disappear, eat up all the sweetmeats, and scorn a nice hand picked herring with a hook in it.

On Tuesday, August 25, I went out, alone, at 3 A. M., planning to return for late breakfast. We saw no fish until eight o'clock. Then a huge one, judging from the swirl it made, broke, right beside the boat. The old rascal went from one boat to another until he had been fed at least fifty herrings. Then he sulked. No hooks for him. At nine, the fish, or one of a similar size, showed up again, and struck my bait with its tail, knocking the glass globe high in the air, and breaking the string. Then it also departed. All of the boats but two left for home. We refused to throw out any more herring. At nine-forty, the fish again swirled, directly behind my bait, grabbed it, and was off. We judged its length as nine and a half feet, and weight around 800 pounds. We slipped anchor, cleared the deck, and followed it out. One doesn't try to "play" a fish of that size; you simply hold on, and pray that it will keep out of the nets. Occasionally, they don't, and then the devil is to pay. On the preceding day, one had run under six nets, turned, and back trailed. The nets may be lifted over the boat, if there is time, otherwise a razor-sharp butcher knife is a pearl of great price. I knew one man whose net bill, for a single day, was \$27.00. Fortunately, my fish steered straight for the lighthouse and the open sea.

He had out about 1,000 feet of No. 39 line. Some of the anglers fish from dories, using a cruiser for a tender, but that day I had the 36 foot cruiser. Once clear of the nets, Captain Lance threw the engine into neutral, and let the tuna do the work. You simply cannot steer a

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fish as big as that, the fish does the steering—and about everything else. Out, past the lighthouse, six, eight, ten miles we went, past the outer buoy, out, out, out. I thought I could see the skyscrapers of Halifax in the distance! I tried to pump. The line felt as if it were tied to a steam dredge. Not the ghost of a response. The big boy simply took the lead and kept it.

The early morning air had been chill, and I had on about six layers of clothing, all firmly bound down by my tightly strapped harness. Twelve o'clock rolled around, then two, four, six. None of us except the tuna had had any breakfast. He was nicely stoked up on about a bushel of fresh herring. At 8:30 P. M. Commodore Penney brought Mrs. Sutton and several friends out to see us "land the fish." They dared not come near enough to give us anything more substantial than advice and good wishes, so at ten, they left us. At twelve-thirty it began to drizzle, and I was glad that I had on everything I owned. No sleet, but nice and cold. The fish didn't pull quite so hard, and I could feel it shake its head, and occasionally hit the leader with its tail. It began to circle. We thought we had it under control. But the old boy must have had a bottle of tonic hidden away somewhere, for about two, he straightened out, and began high tailing it back toward the lighthouse. At that time, we judged we had travelled about thirty miles. Once under way again, the going appeared to improve. Every once in a while, the noble quarry—if one might call a torpedo of that sort a quarry—would wander from the straight and narrow path, but generally speaking, the lighthouse was his goal.

My arms were numb, my legs and thighs appeared to be paralyzed, and you could have fried an egg on the

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right side plate of the 16/0 reel. And still we went. The boys tied me tightly in the chair, and I sat there, and pumped and prayed. A light wind sprang up, then a fairly heavy wind. The moon went out, under a black cloud. And then a squall struck us. Finally, at four, I told the Captain that we'd better call it a day. He took hold of the line, to estimate the strength of our "captive". "He's got us licked, I guess. The old devil." Nickerson picked up the butcher knife. "Shall I?" he asked. "You're asking me?" I moaned. A fraction of a second later, and we were free. A minute more, and we were pointed toward home, a hot breakfast, and a soft bed.

The sort of fight a fish puts up is mainly dependent upon the manner in which it was hooked. If the steel lodges in the upper lip, the roof of the mouth, the tongue, or the throat, the angler's chances are immeasurably improved. Foul hooked, or hooked far down in the corner of the mouth, the chances are not so good. I was unfortunate, for I drew some tough ones. But I had a mighty good time, and I wouldn't have missed the fun for a thousand pound fish delivered at the dock. In August, 1935, Roy Haines, of Washington, D. C., one of the finest and most enthusiastic sportsmen that I ever met, fought a large fish for more than nine hours, finally landing it out of a dory. It was hooked inside the right cheek, the trace firmly clamped in the angle of the mouth. On the other hand, a Staten Island angler who had never before seen a big live fish landed a seven hundred pounder right before our eyes in less than forty minutes! I suspect that I had used up all of my good luck at Port Aransas, the month before, when I boated eighty-nine tarpon in twenty-one days, for ill fortune continued to pursue me, but I was not worried. I was fishing for ex-

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ercise and recreation, and I certainly got both. At 5:30 A. M., on August 29, I had a heavy strike. The float string snapped, the glass ball leaped high in the air, I set the steel, and we were off. This fish started straight for the nets, and nothing could turn it. I had plenty of line, fifteen hundred yards, but it was only 39 thread, too light for work of this sort. The big fellow dived beneath net after net, ploughing forward under a light drag. Heavy tension means disaster if the quarry rounds a net anchor rope, the line promptly becomes "burned", and a light one snaps in two. Under the tail of the big pound net our newly found acquaintance went. Lance promptly cut the tail rope, and we were free. Finally, after twenty minutes of almost breathless struggle and suspense, the tough old opportunist succeeded in outgeneraling us, and the line was scorched on the anchor rope of the last net in the set-up! Hard luck, but at least we had the thrill.

We ran over to our old station, anchored again, and threw over our baits. Two hours later, out of a clear sky, I got another strike. Not a sign of tuna had we seen. Again, our prize started for the nets. But at the second barrier it turned, and made for the lighthouse, and deep water. I snapped on the harness, the Captain turned the bow of the boat in the proper direction, and threw the engine into neutral, and the old horse buckled down to work. Owing to my inability to successfully handle the previous jobs, and the fact that I had already broken five new thirty-nine thread lines, I did not put on much pressure during the first two hours. But the drag on the big Kavolvsky reel could be regulated to a nicety, and before long I was around the eighty pound mark. Hour after hour I kept this up. I wanted the fish, but even more, I yearned to erase the smiles on the faces of

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some of my friends who were in the habit of greeting me with "What, did another one get away?" At four o'clock we appeared to be gaining ground, and half an hour later, we were able to touch the end of the double line. This meant that our handsome piscatorial speedster was less than fifty feet away. We were not looking for records; what we ardently desired was a big tuna. If the cord and hook would have held, I should have been perfectly willing to have bent the line around a capstan, and given that monster the ride of its life.

The locks on my harness gave way, but we laced them to the reel with heavy twine, and I continued to pump. Our noble prize appeared willing to encourage us, but diffidence simply would not permit it to approach nearer than fifty feet. Time and again we had the big fellow up on the surface, but apparently the thought of surrendering never entered its thick skull. Round and round we went. Finally, at eight o'clock, Commodore Penney himself, with George Hatt as bodyguard, arrived. "Have you got him?" he called, across the water. "No. But he's got us," I replied disconsolately. The Commodore climbed aboard. "I believe I can land it in the dory," said he. All three of us were pretty well done up. "Give us another hour," begged Lance. But the huge fish continued to hammer at the leader, and dodge about under the cruiser.

Finally, Penney, Nickerson and I crawled into the dory, and the chief took the double line. "Oh, if it were only a 54 thread," he kept murmuring. "Or a 72." I snapped, "We'd jerk his damned liver out." But the removal of that tuna's liver was left to a better man than me. Two hours of weary hand-lining, then a trifle too much pressure, and the double leader snapped like a

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thread. Plenty of alibis, but no fish. The following day, I started for home.

Next year, the first tuna and I will reach Liverpool at about the same time. Both of us probably will have good appetites, but I shall also be provided with several thousand yards of new fifty-four thread, a dozen stainless steel, 570 pound test leaders, a couple of my old reliable 16/0 reels, and the set of Hoag cable built rods that have never yet failed me. And here's to Lady Luck!

*Where the jelly fish float  
And the fog drifts in,  
And the only tuna you see  
Is a fin,  
And the little wife sits,  
With a reel on her lap,  
And wishes and longs  
For a jolly good nap.*

## TARPON AT TWILIGHT

NOAH Webster was a great man, but his definition of contentment is incomplete. He should have added, "A good motor boat, a 6-9 tarpon outfit, and a calm day at Port Aransas, Texas." June fishing is surest, for it is then that the huge schools of giant fish slowly work their way up the Coast, occasionally stopping to spend a few hours investigating the waters of the quiet bays and inlets that scallop the low sandy shores. But it is in early Fall, when the big boys, full of pep and ginger and fat mullet, start southward that a happy and hilarious time may be predicted for all. With the first October norther, the Silver Kings foregather in the channels and deeper waterways. A second cold snap sends them scurrying on their way, like a troupe of wild horses before a winter gale.

Occasionally, they hesitate alongside a tide rip, or in the tumultuous waters near the ends of the jetties, to pick up a few of the startled small fry, but they never bide for long. They are agile and alert, and only the most skilled of boatmen can successfully outguess them.

As an experienced angler once told me, "Anybody can catch tarpon here in June, but it takes an expert to hang up a good string in October." His reference to "a good string" was purely figurative, for worthwhile sportsmen seldom bring in a tarpon at any time. The beautiful creatures are drawn up alongside the boat, gently gaffed, and carefully released, unhurt.

For nearly two decades, Mrs. Sutton and I have always been on hand to wind up the tarpon season at Port Aransas in October of each year, and these brief Fall vaca-



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tions have proved to be among the happiest of our lives. In 1935, the fish departed for the South a bit earlier than usual, but as the Summer of 1936 was a warm one in Texas, we did not register at the famous old caravansary, Tarpon Inn, until October 19. Two of our Dallas friends, Mr. and Mrs. George Foote, reached Mustang Island the same day, and R. B. ("Bob") MacBride, of Modesto, California, one of the most widely known marlin and salmon fishermen on the Pacific coast, arrived three days later. MacBride, who is a Hoag rod enthusiast, brought to me a letter of introduction from that famous old maestro and tackle artist. What he should have brought was a pair of handcuffs for his own use, for he went out and promptly caught nearly all the tarpon that still remained in the vicinity of Mustang Island. When it comes to fishing, he certainly is one nickel plated wildcat. Aside from the fact that he is a late sleeper, and prefers to get up at five-thirty rather than five, I found him fully up to Hoag's specifications.

One of the most attractive features of Port Aransas is the convenient location of the fishing grounds. When it is rough outside, one can always find good territory, for giant redfish, trout, sheepshead, and even tarpon, in the protected bays and channels.

The first week of our stay, the gargantuan Silver Kings were plentiful, but after that, our efforts were confined to the capture of redfish and sea trout.

During the Fall migration, the fishing generally is best in the evening. If one can find a well marked tide rip, somewhere alongside the main channel, the chances are that tarpon will be feeding there.

On the present trip, for the first time, I learned that a

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specially trained bird dog might profitably be used in locating these game fish.

At this time of the year, the tarpon are exceedingly plump, and overfed, for mullet and similar small fry are numerous along the upper coast. Where great numbers of tarpon congregate, it is not unusual to find patches of oily scum on the overlying water. Another characteristic, rare, but undoubtedly pathognomonic, is the occasional presence of a peculiar watermelon-like odor. Don Farley, a famous boatman, first called my attention to this phenomenon. His evidence was corroborated by Barney Farley, and by George Foote, both of whom are tarpon anglers of wide experience.

On the afternoon of the fourth Saturday in October, Mrs. Sutton and I were fishing a rip at the north side of the channel. Suddenly, and unexpectedly, the fish began striking. During the hour between five-thirty and six-thirty, we "jumped" seven, all large fish. In tarpon parlance, a "bite" without hooking or jumping the fish is called a "pull", a "strike" is a bite followed by the leap of the quarry into the air. But not all fish that strike are caught. Far from it! In the Spring, along the beaches, I have known an angler to get seventeen strikes, and not boat a single fish. And that angler was myself. For some reason, probably emotional, when hooked in shallow water a tarpon goes hog-wild. It appears to think that the devil has it by the chin, and acts accordingly.

The next afternoon, we again tried our luck at the end of the North Jetty. This time, we were accompanied by Captain Jim Ellis, one of the most noted of Texas sportsmen. If all the tarpon caught by Captain Jim were laid end to end, they would easily reach from Corpus Christi to Winnipeg, or even beyond.

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Back and forth, up and down, we trolled and we jigged. Finally, my little wife, never very patient, declared that further effort was useless. Even Captain Jim was nodding, while Don and I criticised the indifferent fish. The wind was from the southwest. As we approached the red channel marker for perhaps the twentieth time, my nose caught an unusual but unmistakable odor. "There's your watermelon smell, Don", I almost shouted, "Now where are your tarpon?" Don was nonplussed. We tried the channel, we investigated the first jetty pocket, we circled the familiar red marker, time and again. But no fish appeared. Finally, we decided to call it a day. Don was obstinate. "They should be here," he insisted, "And that watermelon smell proves that they are here. Do you mind if I run over to the south side?" We were not half way across the channel when he saw a feeding tarpon leaping in the rough water near the end of the jetty. "There they are!" he yelled, and stepped on the gas. MacBride and "Swede" Swanson, his boatman, were already there, but had not yet begun collecting the harvest.

"Let me try it here," I gasped, as we reached the edge of the breakers. I flipped a mullet into the water, a few feet behind the boat. "Bang!" and a hungry six-footer grabbed it, and jerked me almost out of my chair. Then followed forty minutes of the wildest fishing that I have ever experienced. All of the tarpon were large, and all, apparently, nearly famished. Captain Jim had one on before I could boat mine. Don baited and threw out Mrs. Sutton's line, and almost instantly she hooked a third! Fifty yards away, Bob MacBride was putting a permanent wave in one of Hoag's cable built masterpieces, and just across the jetty a fat man from Baltimore was fight-

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ing a five foot shark and berating his luck because of the time he was losing.

Mrs. Sutton, tucked back under the awning, was gasping, "I can't pump, I can't pump! What'll I do, what'll I do?" Captain Jim was grunting, and sweating, and swearing that he had on a nine foot fish. Far be it from me to boast, but I was the only efficient workman in the outfit.

Don snatched the leader as my prize came alongside. I reached over and took the Lady's rod, dear old Captain Jim continued to crank, and pull, and moan. Don released my fish, re-baited the hook, tossed it out, and by the time I had Mrs. Sutton's fish up to the boat, she had another one on!

I passed mine to Don, and, while Captain Jim plaintively insisted that he had rheumatism, corns, a sprained thumb, and a bad heart, and needed a small drink very, very much indeed, I "spelled" him, and took over the athletic little minnow that was turning somersaults at the end of his line. It really was a buster, about six feet two inches long, and weighed fully a hundred and fifty pounds.

Thus the show went on. MacBride insisted that while it lasted, it was better than any three ringed circus. In approximately forty minutes, we hooked eleven tarpon, broke one line, and landed eight fish.

It was a fitting finale to a good year, and apparently a farewell gesture of the Red Gods. Not another Silver King was caught at Port Aransas in 1936.

## THE PREXIES MEET THE SILVER KINGS

*What will the tarpons do, poor fish,  
As in the Gulf they flutter and swish?  
What will they think when the Ph. Ds.  
Bait their hooks with doctors' degrees?  
We guess the boss of the tarpons then  
Will say to his crew: "Now gentlemen!  
This is a fight to make tarpon lore,  
So make the waters rumble and roar,  
And as a prize, bring back to me  
A shiny Phi Beta Kappa Key!"*

—Doc Hartley, in the *Kansas City Star*.

**J**UNE at Port Aransas! The water is clear and blue, the salt air has a stimulating and never-to-be-forgotten tang, the nights are so cool as to demand the use of a light blanket for comfort, and the sea food is at its best. Only an angler could ask for more, and his prayer shall be answered for it is in spring that the lordly tarpon, king of game fish, starts on his annual pilgrimage up the Gulf coast, bound for Florida and parts unknown.

For many months four enthusiastic anglers had been watching the calendar, checking off the days as the seemingly endless procession dragged by, and reckoning the apparently tardy future with the impatience of a bunch of school boys looking forward to a late Easter.

At last the eventful day arrived, and Chancellor E. H. Lindley, of the University of Kansas, tall, slender, gracious, and benign; President Walter A. Jessup, of the University of Iowa, a broad shouldered, athletic product of the Indiana hills—serious if need be, but when on vaca-

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tion as carefree and hilarious as any one of the 10,000 students at Iowa City, who look to him for scholastic guidance and spiritual sustenance; and the writer, a weary and hard-boiled old leopard of the dermatological jungles, who for nearly fifty years has been vainly trying to catch up with his fishing, clambered aboard the Katy "Texas Special," bound for the promised land.

President L. D. Coffman, of the University of Minnesota, the fourth member of the party, had at almost the last minute received a hurry call from a neighboring university to give a pinch-hit graduation address for some eminent brother who was unable to be present. As a sort of additional inducement, the institution prevailed upon him to accept another LL. D., a distinction which he did not really need, as his accumulation of honorary literary degrees already was as the sands of the sea. In consequence, the doughty angler from Minneapolis, who is undoubtedly the most industrious and strenuous disciple of old Izaak that I have ever met, was three days late for the rendezvous.

The time was not entirely wasted however, for not only did he deliver the address in a highly satisfactory manner and collect the LL. D., en passant, with dignity and grace, but also lost a new suit of pajamas in Chicago, and left a handsome pair of Christmas slippers on the Katy Pullman. As misfortunes, like blessings, generally run in series of three, he wound up by calmly sitting in the Southern Pacific Depot at San Antonio while his train rambled off to Corpus Christi without him. We are quite familiar with the gentleman's idiosyncrasies as well as his virtues, however, and as we never expect to see him until the moment of his actual appearance, we wasted very little time worrying about him. President

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Coffman is one of those rare individuals who always land on their feet, and as he is as full of energy and initiative as a package of T. N. T., he invariably makes good. If he had not become a famous educator, he would have been an eminent jurist, or a great legislator, or a renowned medical man, or, it may be, a celebrated angler.

Our trip to San Antonio was a thoroughly enjoyable one, although Dr. Lindley and I twice experienced considerable difficulty in extracting President Jessup from the new refrigerated dining car. The gentleman who hails from the land where the tall corn grows insisted that the artificially cooled van was carried for the purpose of comforting as well as sustaining the passengers, and as the first night out was an intolerably hot one, I believe that he would have slept in the diner had we not cajoled him back into the Pullman.

Corpus Christi was reached early Monday morning, and my old friend Ricardo Rodriguez was on hand to taxi us over to Port Aransas. An hour later Capt. Jim Ellis and his charming wife were welcoming us to Tarpon Inn.

On our vacation at Chabot's Island, Lake of the Woods, Ont., the year before, our labors, or at least the labors of my three confederates, had not been well rewarded. In fact, the muskellunge had utterly ignored them, and as I was again temporarily in command, I felt quite sure that if the fish at Port Aransas did not "do their stuff," some one in our party might be thrown bodily into the Gulf, without benefit of priest or bell. And this innocent victim would be, in all probability, a fat, bald-headed medico.

Until the arrival of President Coffman, Chancellor Lindley and I were to be chaperoned by Don Farley, one of the keenest and most capable guides on the Texas

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Coast, and Dr. Jessup was to sail with my old friend, Dr. J. P. Fruit, who is not only a famed professor of English, but an exceedingly well informed student of piscatorial psychology. Chick Roberts, an energetic and capable captain of the tarpon fleet, had charge of their boat. After the arrival of Dr. Coffman we annexed Chick's brother, Godfrey, a curly headed giant of the reefs, who is an expert boatman and a famous duck hunter as well. Godfrey's war record also is an enviable one, and, incidentally, he is probably the only Republican on Mustang Island. For many years he has served as postmaster-in-chief for the little municipality.

Shortly after our arrival, two more dear and valued friends of mine, Dr. and Mrs. Stuart C. Way, of San Francisco, reached Port Aransas. Dr. Way is an expert on salmon, trout, and sea bass, but when it comes to playing tag with tarpon, his little wife, "Patsy", is so much more fortunate and skillful than he that she practically leaves him standing on the dock. Their guide, Oscar Gillespie, is the worthy scion of a seafaring family that has for years made history on Mustang Island.

All of us were eager for the fray. We changed our clothes while our guides set up and tested our equipment, gulped down a few bites of luncheon (much to the distress of Mrs. Ellis, and her chef, who had taken particular pains to start us off well), and 1 o'clock found us on the dock.

The motor boats at Port Aransas are not large. They average only from 20 to 25 feet in length, but the majority are equipped with new, four cylinder Chevrolet engines, and as their owners take great pride in them, they are fast, clean, and snappy little crafts.



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Aransas Pass, the pass or channel where the fishing is done, is a "deep channel connecting the waters of the Gulf of Mexico with those of Aransas and Corpus Christi Bays, and is situated between Mustang Island on the south, and St. Joseph's island on the north. This channel is several miles long, and on the inside between St. Joseph, Mustang and Harbor Islands, forms a deep basin. The channel itself is about 2,000 feet wide. On the outer, or Gulf side, it is paralleled by two rock jetties extending into the waters of the Gulf. The tides, the wind, and the influence of the jetties keep the waters of the Pass in almost constant motion. The channel is from 25 to 35 feet deep."

The great schools of fish that move summer and winter up or down the Gulf coast make these waters a stopping place. In the spring the best tarpon fishing is to be had near the outer end and on the south side of the south jetty. In bad weather, the boats are compelled to remain in the channel, or, if the water is extremely rough, they seek refuge in the harbor, and at Murray's Reef or Mud Bay.

The day we reached Port Aransas, however, the water was clear and blue, with just a breath of wind to ruffle the surface. Don, who is as frank and outspoken as he is transparently honest, remarked, "Well, Doc, we're a goin' to romp on 'em to-day," and I knew that all was well with the world.

For the angler of average skill at Aransas Pass, a heavy, split-bamboo rod, from 5 to 6 feet long, and weighing from 9 to 12 ounces probably is best. This is the type of rod usually carried for rental purposes at the Hotel. The reel should be of No. 4 size, Pfleuger or vom Hofe, and equipped with an adjustable, mechanical drag,

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so that when the fish pulls, the handle cannot revolve backward, otherwise somebody is liable to get a broken finger. The lines vary from twelve to twenty-four thread (24 to 48-pound test). Fortunately, the tarpon is not a table fish, otherwise the species would soon become extinct, and it is not considered good form to bring in a lot of dead ones in order to prove the angler's skill. Consequently, it will probably be many years before the supply is seriously depleted.

The principal object in catching a game fish is of course to outwit and conquer it, and the greater the contest, the greater the sport. For this reason, the tendency in recent years has been to employ lighter and lighter tackle.

The standard 9-6 outfit consists of from 600 to 900 feet of No. 9 (18-pound test) linen line, and a split bamboo rod with a tip weighing 6 ounces or less. Personally, I prefer a 6-foot rod, weighing 4 ounces. On the present trip, I had wonderful success with a South Bend Cross "double-built" muskellunge casting rod. My old friend, Henry U. Birdseye, of Miami, Fla., prefers a 9-foot fly rod, weighing about 6 ounces! With this very sporting piece of equipment he has landed a number of large tarpon in less than an hour.

Acting on the suggestion of Don Farley, my boatman, I now use a barbless instead of barbed hooks. The barb is filed off of a No. 7 or No. 8 O'Shaughnessy hook, and the point ground to needle-like sharpness. A 6-foot, piano wire leader is then attached, otherwise the fin or tail of the tarpon may fray the thin line. A medium sized swivel connects the leader with the end of 200 or 300 yards of Pflueger Special 9-thread, natural color, sailfish line. If

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a fairly long and springy rod is selected, the angler will be able to keep the fish constantly under light pressure and the percentage of fish lost will be considerably less than when ordinary tackle is used. The structure of the tarpon's mouth is such that in many instances it is extremely difficult to set the hook, and a hook with a sharp, slender, lance-like point penetrates much more readily than one having a hump, or shoulder on it, such as all barbed hooks necessarily must have. In fact, one can securely hang a tarpon on a barbless hook with a 6 or 9-thread line more easily than when using a large barbed hook and heavy tackle. And, once on, with the "spider equipment," the average fish will give the angler twice the amount of entertainment.

One of the greatest attractions of tarpon fishing is the beauty and sprightliness of the quarry. The silver king is the prince of jumpers, and it is when caught on light tackle, with a long rod, that he performs best. Ten jumps are not uncommon and Mr. Birdseye tells me that when using a fly rod, he often gets twenty or even more. The fish is so beautiful and so clean looking that when one does escape, as many invariably do, the sportsman does not feel angry and vituperative, and prone to indulge in the blasphemy which is so common with the muskellunge fisherman. "Good old boy, see you again sometime," he will cheerfully exclaim. "Thanks for the thrill," and starts trolling for another one. The musky, hard-boiled old warrior of the inland seas, is an enemy to be conquered at any cost; the tarpon, a playmate to be loved, admired, and probably released.

For this reason, all tarpon fishermen hate sharks. These ghouls of the sea cannot catch a silver king under ordinary conditions. But the moment one is weary or

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disabled, a big hammerhead, or tiger shark, is very likely to put in its appearance, and, once the prey is sighted, its fearlessness and impudence is little short of amazing. They are cowards, and prefer to attack in deep water, consequently the light-tackle angler always endeavors to fight his fish near the beach or close to the jetty wall. I have seen a 12-foot shark cut a tarpon entirely in two, just as the prize was being hauled aboard, and then brazenly stick its head out of the water, looking for the other half!

After a tarpon has been captured and brought alongside for release, it is always well to run into shallow water in order to protect the silvery aristocrat until he has regained his strength.

During the first afternoon, Fate brought us lots of strikes but no trophies. Some of my ill luck was due to my own carelessness. In placing the lines on my reels, I had wound them too loosely, and I lost two fish when the line cut into, and became bound, by the soft core. My first fish was a 6-footer, caught outside the north jetty. We were trolling with the baits about 40 feet behind the boat. At this distance, the mullet lures ride about 4 feet below the surface.

Dr. Lindley and I were making our second round when I felt a tremendous "pull." I set the hook with a smooth, steady jerk, and, a fraction of a second later, my newly found, silver coated acquaintance came out of the water with a bounce! Don shot the boat forward to aid me in keeping a taut line, but his help was not needed. Apparently the huge old fellow was on for keeps. Dear Chancellor Lindley reeled in his line with trembling fingers. He had never before seen a live tarpon, and the thrill was almost too much for his nervous system. "Such

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a fish, such a fish!" he kept repeating. And at last, "What on earth are you going to do with it on that little pole?"

Don and I got almost as great a kick out of it as the eminent educator. We herded the long, graceful beauty out into the open, away from the other boats. Once more and again he jumped, his beautiful coat of glistening silver mail sparkling in the sun. Then a long, determined run of 300 or 400 feet. A ship's hawser could scarcely have withstood the strain, let alone a slender, vibrating thread such as a No. 9 line, and with an effort I controlled my thumb and let the mechanical drag, set at 12 pounds, do the work. But 12 pounds was as nothing to that athletic old warrior. Slowly I worked him in, fighting every foot of the way, until we could see his perfectly proportioned outline just beneath the surface, and about 30 feet behind the boat. He swam parallel to our craft for a few hundred yards and then was off again.

The pressure from the drag appeared to hamper him very little. In fact, he seemed to pick up speed as he traveled, until the click on my Atlapac fairly shrieked. Finally, I thought an additional pound or two of friction might have a soothing effect on him, and I gently brought the ball of my thumb down on the pad. But he seemed only to relish it. The second 100 yards of line vanished into nothingness. There was a hesitant stumble, a jerk, then a snap, and I was holding tightly to a fish-free rod! The line had cut into the soft, loosely wound core, caught and broke. The big fellow celebrated his newly acquired freedom by two more fancy buckjumps, and we never saw him again. He certainly was a sporting proposition! I had much rather catch a fish like that and lose him, than hook and land a lazy, pepless one.

## THE PREXIES MEET THE SILVER KINGS

A few minutes later the Chancellor tied into a monster that closely resembled a huge, nickel plated whale! It was gargantuan!

Strange to say, his captor never flinched. He calmly and methodically flipped up the tip of his heavy rod to set the hook, then leaned back in the seat and stiffened his muscles as the silvery leviathan pointed its nose toward Tampico, and stepped on the gas. For fifteen minutes the odds were all in favor of the Chancellor, he was breathing a little faster than normal, but if anybody really needed a dose of digitalis or a shot in the arm, it certainly was not the foremost citizen of the state of Kansas.

At last the big fish was worked up to within a few feet of the boat, and then, to my horror, I saw that the hook was but lightly caught in the edge of its lip. Only an expert could have kept it on the line up to that point. A last, long, despairing run straight away from the boat, the hook tore out, and Dr. Lindley's first silver king was free! I trust it appreciated the honor that had been conferred upon it, but I doubt it.

After that, ill luck dogged the Chancellor for the rest of the afternoon. Five different fish were hooked, and every blessed one of them, by some mischance, escaped. His second tarpon, a 5-footer, took the bait from the rear, and came near jumping right into the boat! The next one bit "short." The fourth grabbed the mullet as we were making a turn (common while sailfishing, but unusual with tarpon) and profited by a slack line, and so it went.

I did no better. Dr. Jessup also failed to register, consequently it was a weary and discomfited bunch of fishermen that congregated at our table that night.

## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

Tuesday also proved an off day for Dr. Lindley. Apparently the fish admired him and liked the looks of his bait, they simply would not remain on the hook! He exchanged places with President Jessup, and the latter even jokingly suggested that it might help matters if he walked around the boat three times, but the tarpon were as adamant.

My luck shifted that day, and I began to catch all sorts of things. My first prize was a small sand shark. I was then promoted to a corpse-like, salt-water catfish, then another little shark, and finally a tarpon!

About 2 o'clock on Tuesday, Dr. Jessup and I were cruising alongside the North Jetty when I hooked a veritable monster. The old chief had darted in at a right angle, and in the melee that followed, got snagged in the left cheek! The needle-like point on the barbless hook had sunk deep however, and I was fortunate in being able to keep the line free from slack. A couple of wild jumps, and the big fellow was off. I was using a new Heddon light tackle rod that afternoon, and the slender tip bent and vibrated like a fine steel fencing foil. I have never had a greater thrill out of a fish. Dr. Jessup, calm and pedantic, quickly brought in his line to prevent fouling, and Don swung the boat well out from the rocks. After fifteen minutes of this rather violent sort of exercise, I began to grow a bit weary of my newly acquired bargain, for I saw a two-hour fight and a lot of hard work ahead of me. So I persuaded my handsome Nordic friend from Iowa to take the rod. I have never seen a fish fought more gracefully or with greater skill. The only serious drawback was the absence of a rod belt and socket. Dr. Jessup had been fishing with a long handled, heavy rod, which requires no belt, and I seldom use one.

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In consequence, the but of the short hand grip on my little Heddon had to nestle directly upon the president's abdomen, and before the battle was over his front elevation closely resembled that of a waffle iron. But he stuck to his job like a Trojan, and chuckled and joked as he wound in seemingly miles and miles of line, and "pumped" away at the 140 pounds of extremely stubborn baby whale.

After an hour of this sort of strenuous entertainment, a new element, in the form of a large and apparently very hungry shark, broke into the game. Our bull-headed little pet still possessed a lot of energy, however, and simply pointed its stubby nose toward Point Isabel, and set its speedometer at the 30 miles an hour mark. Don followed, as fast as our boat could travel, and Brother Jessup wrapped both legs around the rod, stood on the nape of his neck, and tried his best to wear out a perfectly good, new Pflueger reel. Fortunately, we succeeded in losing the shark, but at the end of an hour and fifty minutes, when our prize was gaffed, we were three extremely weary and perspiring fishermen, our boat not far from the mouth of the Rio Grande and almost out of gasoline.

After that epochal struggle, President Jessup was the hero of Port Aransas. He feared nothing. The tarpon was 6 feet, 3 inches long, with a girth of 38 inches, and weighed 142 pounds.

Wednesday morning Chancellor Lindley's luck changed for the better, and at 7 A. M. he hooked and landed a beautiful fish near the end of the South Jetty. Every morning, for three days, he repeated the performance. It seemed as if the huge fellows knew of his coming, and were awaiting him.



## THE SILVER KINGS OF ARANSAS PASS

Dr. Coffman arrived Thursday noon, but apparently he too had to take his turn. Fate was inexorable. He practiced on sharks and hard-boiled old jacks for a day, then a storm blew in. We had two days of rough, muddy water, and it was not until the following Tuesday that the representative from Minnesota began to register. Once started, however, there was no stopping him, and he caught long ones and short ones, fat ones and lean ones, grandfathers and infants in arms, until I feared the Gulf would be depopulated. Probably it would if he had not returned the majority of them, uninjured, to the water.

At the suggestion of Don, my versatile young boatman, a gentleman from San Antonio had brought to the port a thermos jug full of goldfish for bait, and he was so generous as to give me one of them. The experiment proved a failure, and after unsuccessfully trailing the shiny little morsel about on the end of a line for an hour or two, I presented him to my boatman, and ultimately Don caught a catfish with it. But Port Aransas catfish look like ghosts, and taste like fricasseed oakum, consequently we felt that it was only another instance of "Love's labor lost," and went back to mullet.

The bait commonly used for tarpon is the ordinary mullet (*Mugil cephalus*), although the silver mullet (*Mugil curama*), if procurable, is far superior.

Chancellor Lindley's happiest afternoon was spent on the dock, trying for a gar. He was assisted by fifteen or twenty little chaps, freckle-faced and sandy-haired for the most part, all of them energetic fishermen, chock-full of enthusiasm and advice. A hospitable youngster, who had just captured a small ash-colored bullhead with pink whiskers, halved it with a dull pocket knife, and grac-

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iously presented a portion to the kindly Prexy. "What are you going to do with the other half?" asked Dr. Lindley. "Other half's for the cat," said the little fellow, and just then a huge black feline, with a pleasure-arched back and gently waving tail, strolled up to claim its share.

Finally a gar began nibbling at the bait and carried it out several feet from the dock. "Snag him!" yelled one diminutive cicerone. "Let him swallow it," sagely advised another. "Wait until he turns," insisted a third. At last the gar, which was about 7 feet long, attached itself to the hook, or at least appeared to do so. Dr. Lindley drew it up to the wharf and half a dozen youthful volunteers rushed forward to gaff it. The honor fell to a grave young gentleman from San Antonio, who took the responsibility very seriously, indeed. He gently stooped over and reached downward. The point of the big hook rested on the gar's wishbone. A second's hesitation, as the amateur drew a deep breath, and possibly muttered a prayer to the gods, and then—Apparently the wily old representative of the famous long nosed family *Belonidae* concluded that this group of handsome bipeds was acting in a very suspicious manner. He promptly opened his mouth, the bit of catfish containing the hook dropped out, and Mr. Garfish promptly disappeared from the scene.

## DOUBLE HEADERS IN THE BAY OF PLENTY

*I do not know, I cannot say,  
Perhaps she could not find me,  
But when I left my native land,  
I left my luck behind me.*

—*The Irishman's Lament.*

**D**AME FORTUNE is a fickle lass. When the above ditty popped into my head, my little wife and I were slowly freezing to death in Florida. We had left home early in February, hoping to catch a few fish in the South. But the bass wouldn't bite, and the chimney wouldn't draw, and we found snow as far down as Atlanta, certainly no place for a bald headed old bird like me. Summer never did overtake us.

Twelve months later, we were on the "Aorangi," out of Vancouver, Australia bound. Zane Grey had filled me full of stories about thousand pound swordfish and forty foot sharks, and as I have learned to have implicit confidence in this handsome gentleman, all I could do was to mortgage the family cat, and buy a couple of tickets 'round the Pacific. My charming frau insists that this hypersusceptibility to temptation ultimately will prove my ruin, but if I must fall, I'd rather fall in the company of Zane Grey than in that of any other man on earth.

Just out of Fiji, we learned that a fast weekly inter-island steamship service had recently been established between New Zealand and Australia. This gave me an idea. Why not spend a few days at Tuhua, or Mayor

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Island, in the Bay of Plenty, and then catch the "Awa-tea" for Australia?

Our steamer tickets were interchangeable, and the more I thought about it the more it appealed to me. Fifteen minutes later, I was in the purser's office, making arrangements to drop off the boat at Auckland. Owing to the shipping strike, space was at a premium, and they were only too glad to get rid of us.

Generally speaking, I pride myself on my foresight, but this time my foot slipped. When I tried to get reservations on the "Awatea," I discovered that the steamer was already booked to capacity. There wasn't room for a stray cockroach, let alone two well nourished folks like the Lady and myself. Both of us love New Zealand, but an indefinite stay on those charming shores was impracticable at the moment, as we were already signed up for Bali, Hongkong and beyond.

The rather crusty "Aorangi" outfit were coldly sympathetic, but apparently someone had already snapped up our cabin, and left us sitting in the cross-trees, as it were. Fortunately, the weather was warm, and, after all, our letter of credit had not yet been nicked. So matters might have been worse. And I felt sure, as my bone fish guide at Bimini used to say, "The Lawd would provide."

I sent a radio to Tisdall, Ltd., of Auckland, the biggest sport store in all the South Seas, and asked them to reserve a fishing boat for us. Eric Wilson, the head salesman, himself an experienced sportsman, and one of the finest chaps that ever fed feathers to a sophisticated trout, wired back that a man would be awaiting our arrival.

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New Zealand is a modernized Eden, and when I stepped ashore, I felt as if I had a Maori tiki in each vest pocket, and a horseshoe in the seat of my pants. My confidence was justified, for at the steamship office I was fortunate enough to find Mr. P. A. Chappell, of the Union Line. Mr. Chappell should be made Chairman of the Board, for he is one of the most capable and efficient as well as kindest, men that I ever met. His desk was the cyclone center of an enormous business establishment. When I entered his boudoir, a red faced individual who looked to me as if his blood pressure was around the 300 mark, was trying to pry him loose from a ticket which somebody else had already nailed. I apologized for the intrusion, and the future President of the Union Steamship Company, Ltd., rewarded me with a warm handshake, and a gracious smile. Ten minutes later, I left the building with my soul at peace, and a reservation for a room on the "Wanganella," commanded by Captain G. B. Bates, the best skipper in Australasia, in my pocket.

The next morning at nine we were off for Tauranga, two hundred miles away, and the base for fishermen at Mayor Island. Eric had reserved the "Naomi," Captain Arthur Fletcher, for us, and Captain Fletcher, a keen, wiry young man of fifty, met us at the station. Both Mrs. Sutton and I took to him at once, and the longer we knew him the better we liked him. A wonderfully fine man, indefatigable, enthusiastic, and certainly the most skilled marlin fisherman that I ever met. As mate, we had his son, Norman, a handsome, clean young chap, who also quickly won our affectionate admiration.

Mr. Jack Mowlem, the inventor of the famous Mowlem cradle type reel, who is also interested in the "Nao-

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mi," and her sister launch, the "Virginia," came down to the dock to see us off, and wish us "tight lines." Mr. Mowlem spent more than twenty-five years of his life in Africa, and he and I nearly succeeded in talking a leg off of each other. On our return to Tauranga, we had the pleasure of an evening with him and several of his friends. He has a wonderful collection of trophies, including a mounted marlin of around 900 pounds.

"Tuhua," or Mayor, Island, is located about twenty-six miles from Tauranga, in the Bay of Plenty, off the eastern coast of New Zealand. It formerly was a famous Maori stronghold, and is still owned by a contingent of these noble people. We afterward met one of these gentlemen, Andrew Williams, and his young son, Frederick.

A large number of Maoris have at various times been buried in the caves of Tuhua, and it is generally believed that the island also contains valuable caches of "green stone," a semi precious silicate that is widely used in the manufacture of jewelry.

There are no permanent residential quarters on the island. Several years ago, some ambitious New Zealander conceived the idea that fish might profitably be smoked there—the place abounds in fish of all sorts and sizes—but the depression ended the dream, and now only two concrete and wooden buildings mark the spot. Two fine young men from Tauranga, James Curtis and Gordon Swan, have established a restaurant for transient fishermen, and during the months of January, February and March, the little establishment carries on a thriving business. The food is good, and the service excellent, and "Jim" and Gordon are invaluable members of the community.

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The launch masters supply visitors with tents and bedding, through the courtesy of the famous Commercial Hotel, of Tauranga, and there is an excellent supply of drinking water. Dissatisfied patrons are rare. During the ten days we spent at Mayor Island, we met a score or more of charming people from many parts of Australasia. Dr. F. G. Donovan, Dr. Frank Stephens, Mr. Norman Stephens, and Mr. Norman Myer, of Melbourne, occupied tents next to ours, and at various times Mr. Mowlem, Dr. Stuart, a famous Yorkshire angler, Dr. Mark, Dr. Will and Mr. W. A. Peterson, all of Tauranga, were visitors. One of the most enthusiastic anglers was Constable Stanley Audley. Twice I saw him capture marlin as big as sawlogs on a hand line, a real feat!

Our train got in at four, and an hour later, we left for our new home. There was a strong head wind, and it was pretty bumpy. Five miles out, we met the "Virginia" and the "Kingfish," on their way in. The "Virginia" had four big marlin stowed on her decks, and the "Kingfish," Capt. Chadban, which had been out only a few hours, one long nosed black leviathan. This cheered us, considerably. It was more swordfish than either of us had seen in a long time.

In good weather, the boats anchor in Opo Bay, on the east side of the island. During bad weather, they seek shelter where they may. In my opinion, the Government should build a suitable breakwater at the mouth of Opo Bay. It would cost very little, and would be of tremendous value to visiting anglers.

Mayor Island is irregularly oval in shape, and contains 3,145 acres. While there are three or four small bays, the best of the coast line is rugged and precipitous. A

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breakwater of the sort suggested would greatly increase the value of the Island as a tourist attraction. No matter how expert your boatman may be, you do not wish to have him playing hide and seek all night around a rocky and impregnable shore line in order to escape a small windstorm.

We reached Opo at nine. My wife has never been a strong advocate for the primitive life, and had worried so much about having to reside in a small tent, with nothing but a Maori bug and two sand fleas for company, that she had forgotten all about the possible difficulty of getting ashore. We anchored a hundred yards off the beach. I ushered the lady up on deck. Norman pulled the fat little dinghy, eight feet long and five feet wide, alongside. Mama looked down at it. "Do, do you expect me to get into that tiny cockle-shell?" she quavered. "It's easy," Captain Fletcher and I assured her. "You sit right here," and we perched her on the gunwale, "and hang your legs over, so," and we helped her suit the action to the word. "Now, Norman, steady the dinghy," and over little Mama went, landing safely on the middle seat, but with head down, and feet up! A few days of practice, and she did it beautifully, but never without a shiver.

Jim and Gordon had a hot supper ready for us, and our beds were made. That night, we slept like mummies. Up at six, a dash into the surf, a hearty breakfast, and we were set for the day.

A pleasant half-hour with the kahawai, which, fortunately, were plentiful and hungry, but a bit larger than we would have liked, and then off to the swordfish grounds. These bait fish, which travel in schools, vary



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in weight from three to seven or eight pounds. They strike a feather jig or a wooden "dummy" readily, and on hand lines are quite good sport. Mrs. Sutton always gets a great kick out of this part of the program, particularly if she catches practically all of the fish herself.

In many respects, Mayor Island reminds one of San Pedro, off the coast of Sonora, Mexico. It has the same sort of precipitous shores, and the same beautiful, blue-black water. The depth is from forty to eighty fathoms, and, in good weather, marlin are found everywhere.

I have never seen territory richer in swordfish. The majority are of the striped variety, and weigh from 250 to 325 pounds, although many black marlin have been taken here. In my experience, and that of Captain Fletcher, the latter generally travel in pairs. So far as I know, the only waters in which the brunettes outnumber the stripers are those at Sydney Heads, on the east coast of Australia. There, black marlin predominate. Striped marlin are rare. Mako sharks are common visitors in the Bay of Plenty.

Trolling is the method favored here, although we once caught three swordfish in one morning—with one double strike!—drifting. In my opinion, one has a better chance to capture big fish while drifting than with surface baits, but the latter provides the greater thrill. Trolling, one sees the long nosed giant coming up behind the baits, or flashing across in front of the teasers. The long, brown form, with blue side fins, and great, staring eyes, and the erect, fighting "comb" of the dorsal fin can never be forgotten. I challenge any red-blooded angler to match such a charge, and remain unmoved!

"Whack! Whack!" and the bait is fairly disemboweled, then "Drop back! Drop back!!" and you feel your line

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slipping away, foot by foot, and yard by yard, as you try to make your kahawai simulate the actions of a dying victim. A practiced thumb prevents over-running. Suddenly, you feel the fish grip your bait. He is "mouthing" it. Patience, patience, while your pulse races, and you fairly quiver with excitement. Surely, surely the bait will have been swallowed by now! Control yourself. If all goes well, and your quarry does not accidentally prick itself with the hook, there is no hurry. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten! You count, slowly. Then, a turn of the pilot wheel, to tighten the brake, and strike! Strike, and strike again! Thank God, you feel the hook go home. And then, the water boils, a long, sharp snout emerges, and up, up, up he comes! Fish that gorge the hook are safest, but no marlin is ever safe until it is firmly lashed on deck.

The greatest of all salt water game fishes are the tarpon and the marlin. Port Aransas, Texas, is the capital of the tarpon world. Here you may catch the wonderful Silver King, the gentleman of the deep, play with him to your heart's content, and then turn him loose, weary but unharmed, to be caught again some other day. Texas tarpon do not swallow the bait, and as the jaws of this fish are hard and boney, a careful boatman, wearing wet cotton gloves, can release them, uninjured.

Marlin fishing is a different proposition. If the fish does not swallow the bait, together with the hook, and two or three yards of steel trace, it often is "foul hooked," most frequently beneath the right front fin. Marlin are mighty fighters, and even if a fish is still breathing when it reaches the boat, it generally dies soon afterward. I have repeatedly tried to save them, but have never yet succeeded.

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The waters of Mayor Island proved to be the fishing hole of our dreams. We got a strike within twenty minutes on our first day, and the succeeding week was punctuated with thrills. For seven days we had Captain Fletcher and Norman as guides and cicerones. Later, when we had to turn them over to other patrons, we were chaperoned by Captain Bill Marshall, and his very successful A. D. C., Frederick Wilkins, in the launch "Tui," fine men, and a splendid little boat. We had as high as eleven strikes in one day, and once saw seventeen swordfish before luncheon!

The boats at Tuhui have but one swordfish chair, and this multitude of riches sometimes proved embarrassing. We of course fished with two lines, for my wife loves her big Hardy reel, and "multiplex" Hoag rod, and neither love nor money could part me from my Arthur Kavolovsky, which has never failed me in time of need.

I rigged a block with a hole in it, and Captain Fletcher attached it to a seat in the cockpit by means of a big metal clamp—with my harness as a support it served fairly well—while trolling. Mrs. Sutton used the swivel chair. If I got into a fish, she would resign the chair to me. The pinch came when we took on a double header. And, within the short space of four days, we had six double headers. Thank goodness, one of the fish generally managed to escape early, but if it didn't, that cockpit was full of turmoil and trouble for quite some time. Round and round the lady and I would go, using the block if on one side, and a tin bucket between my knees if on the other. It is no fun, this sort of thing, but what could a poor man do? Our time was short, and we had to take advantage of every minute.

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Fortunately, in the majority of instances, we were able to shake off the spare fish. Only one double was fought to a finish, but at the end of an hour and ten minutes, when that last four hundred pound masterpiece was brought to gaff, I assure the gentle reader that the anterior aspect of my poor abdomen resembled nothing so much as a well-worn waffle iron!

## BLACK MARLIN AT SYDNEY HEADS

*The East is dead, and the West is done,  
and again our course lies thus:—  
Northwest by Fate and the Setting Sun,  
where the Three Kings wait for us,  
While our hearts are young, and the world is wide,  
and the heights seem made to climb,  
We are off and away to the Sydney-side,  
but the Three Kings bide their time.*

—Henry Lawson.

**F**EBRUARY in midsummer in Australasia. After a happy and profitable holiday on the Bay of Plenty, my little wife and I decided that we would follow the advice of our sage old friend and mentor, Zane Grey, and try the waters of the Tasman Sea.

Auckland is a charming spot, and we were loath to leave it, but we quickly found a new and happy home on the "Wanganella", with Captain G. B. Bates as host. As our boat slipped along the east shore of the North Island, the familiar coast line recalled happy memories of Cape Brett and the Trevalles.

The Three Kings at last, those sea-girth pinnacles that mark North Cape, and soon we were in the open ocean, Sydney bound.

Dr. Grey had kindly given me an introduction to Errol Bullen, the Dean of Australian big game fishermen. I have never met a finer man, or a better sportsman. In addition to his skill and experience as an angler, Mr. Bullen is a gifted engineer and mechanic. He has invented a level winding salt water reel which is one of

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the most beautiful and efficient pieces of gear that I have ever seen, and his "Atlanta" rods, constructed of three strips of specially treated treble built split cane and three strips of carefully selected second growth hickory, are famous throughout the South Seas.

Bullen is practical as well as talented, and to see him handle a 900 pound tiger shark on this pet equipment of his is a revelation. I have fought a few big fish myself, and I think I know what it takes, but it was Errol Bullen who first showed me how it is successfully done. I learned to have the greatest admiration for his equipment, as well as for the man himself. Reginald Fagan, another widely known Australian angler, is an enthusiastic Bullen fan.

Big game fishing at Sydney is in its infancy, but with such men as Bullen, Fagan, Max Lawson, Sil Rohu, Andreas, and the Nathans behind it, I prophesy an early adolescence. Rohu is a sporting goods dealer as well as angler, and has played as important a part in the promotion of big game fishing in Australia as Tisdall, of Auckland, has in New Zealand. Both men place sport before profit. If a good idea turns up, no one is quicker to recognize, and adopt it, than Sil Rohu.

The greatest drawback to marlin fishing at Sydney Heads is the lack of suitable boats. With Watson's Bay as a base, I believe that at least ten good cruisers could be kept going all of the time.

With us, the question was answered before it was asked. A few minutes after we reached our hotel, Bullen, who is an extremely busy man, called me on the phone. I had not yet had the pleasure of meeting him. "Do not worry about a boat," he said, "mine is ready and is at

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your disposal. Billy Love is to be your boatman." That's Australian hospitality.

Zane Grey had told me of Billy Love, the greatest and most noted of Australian shark fishermen. It is Billy Love who catches all the sharks for the Taronga Park Zoo. Howard Brown, the zoo secretary, and a long time friend of mine, once assured me that if Billy Love were given an order for seventeen nickel-plated devils with pink comets for tails, the devils would be caught, and delivered on schedule. I had hoped to have the honor of meeting Mr. Love, but this was almost too much.

"When you are ready, say the word. And tight lines to you!" And Bullen hung up, before I could master my vocal cords, and thank him. My wife, who is a very skeptical sort of person to be as great a fisherman as she is, insisted that I had misinterpreted the message.

We were stopping at the Hotel Bondi, on Bondi Beach, the finest and best suburban hotel in New South Wales, and when we reached Watson's Bay dock, the next morning, there was the "Atlanta", a snug and beautifully built little boat, as fresh and bright as a new pin, all ready to go, with Billy Love as skipper, and Ralph Farmer as first mate.

Billy Love merits a paragraph all to himself. He is tall, lean, and hawk-faced, with the courage of a lion, and a heart as tender as that of any woman. In appearance, he reminded me very much of Captain Ed Cotter, of Port Aransas, Texas, a man whom I have known intimately for more than twenty years, and who represents the essence of bravery as well as of professional skill. Shipwrecked on a desert island, I would prefer a companion such as Billy Love or Ed Cotter.

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Love goes shark fishing by himself in a small, sixteen-foot boat. A mullet could spit over the gunwhale, and the sharks that Billy hunts are not of the boudoir powder-puff variety. They are huge, ferocious creatures, weighing up to half a ton or more, with teeth that would be the envy of any advertising dentist, and facial expressions that would strike terror in the heart of a shipwrecked wildcat. Love catches these fearless and blood-thirsty living nightmares, whips them to a standstill, brings them to the surface, runs a slip-noose around their tails, and then drags them off to Taronga, where they are kept in salt water pools, for the education and edification of the general public! Take it from one who knows, the sharks of Sydney Heads are not vegetarians! If they were, it would be unnecessary to protect the bathing beaches with heavy wire netting, or patrol the shores by hydroplane.

Sydney Harbor is, in my opinion, the most beautiful in the whole world. At Watson's Bay, the water is deep enough to float a battleship. Marlin have been caught very close in, less than a rifle shot from the wharf. This seems impossible, but it is a fact. Our first big fish was hooked and landed within sight of the cupola of the Hotel Bondi, with the beautiful arch of the Sydney bridge in the background! Strange to say, practically all of the fish caught here have been black marlin. Just why brunettes should predominate, nobody knows. In other waters, at least in waters that I have fished, the proportion is at least twenty striped marlin to one of the black variety. Here the reverse is true. Practically all have been caught while trolling. At Cape Brett, many of the larger swordfish are hooked while "drifting," and in 1935, when Mrs. Sutton and I visited the



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Bay of Islands, at least half of our time was spent floating about Bird Rock and old Piercey.

Personally, I feel it stands to reason that the larger and older and more sophisticated fish will avoid the surface as much as possible, and while I prefer the thrill of a strike on top of the water, if I were out for a record—and could control my impatience!—I would drift.

As yet, the boatmen are not sufficiently familiar with the feeding habits of the marlin at Sydney Heads to successfully employ this method.

Captain Arthur Fletcher, of Tauranga, who is one of the most successful skippers that I have ever met, has called my attention to a fact that I had previously overlooked. Black Marlin often travel in pairs. When one is caught, another probably will be picked up in the immediate vicinity within the next twenty-four hours. This has proved true at Mayor Island, time and again, and also at Montagn, near Bermagui, and Sydney Heads. Errol Bullen caught the second of his beautiful record fish within an hour after boating the first.

On the present "expedition," as my Eastern editorial friend probably would say, our stay at Sydney was brief, and while success crowned our efforts, I will describe only one incident.

We left the dock at eight o'clock, the first morning, and ran out toward Macquarie Light to pick up some bait. Mackerel were plentiful. Twenty minutes with the hand lines, and feather jigs, gave us an ample supply.

Billy Love prefers to run the hook, a 12/0, through the nose of the bait fish, from below upward, afterward working and pulling at it until the line can readily be moved right or left. The mackerel's nose is then at-

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tached to the eye of the hook by means of a halter of heavy twine, a sail needle being utilized to run the cord through the lips of the bait. The bait fish is always killed before attaching it to the hook.

Errol Bullen believes that a heavy and turbulent wake attracts marlin, and for this reason, frequently drags a wooden crossbar, eight feet long, directly behind his boat. The idea was suggested to him by a friend, and is one that is well worth exhaustive trial.

Near the Light, we put out the teasers, which were of the Sil Rohu chromium plated type, and started trolling. We had not gone a mile before a big marlin charged the port decoy. Mrs. Sutton was sitting on that side. Her outfit consisted of a Hardy reel, twelve hundred yards of Jim Richards Special line, and a medium weight Hoag 16 strip bamboo rod.

"There he is!" yelled everyone, practically in unison. A moment later and the fish was beside her bait, a three pound mackerel. "Whack, whack," and he hit it, right and left, with his long proboscis. "Drop back, drop back!" I exclaimed. But the little lady needed no advice. It was her eighth marlin within a month. A half turn of the pilot wheel, and the line began melting away like butter on a hot plate. One hundred feet, two hundred three hundred slipped away. "Now soak him, Grandma," I whooped, my blood pressure topping the gauge, and my hair fairly standing on end. We had recently become proud grandparents, and I only wished that Dicky Moore were there to see his maternal relative perform. A twist of the wheel, and bang, bang, bang! Did Grandma sock him? Grandma did. Billy manipulated the boat like the veteran he is, and Ralph started to get the huge, stainless steel gaff, another of Errol's

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little playthings, ready for business. The fish took the air at once, and as it came up, we saw the trace protruding from the side of its mouth. "You've got him, Lady, you've got him!" I assured her. "Rather, he's got me," Grandmother replied. But she braced her feet and gave the old boy the benefit of her leg muscles. Up and down, up and down went the slender rod, a few feet of line coming in each time.

The huge fellow came toward the boat quite readily, in fact, too readily. Billy gave the wheel a quarter turn, and reached for the gaff. The knot of the double line emerged. It was at the tip of the rod. Now, altogether! But that brunette beauty was only fooling. The fish surged forward. The line began slipping off. Fifty, a hundred, two hundred yards, and still it went, despite at least thirty pounds of drag. "Let him go. He'll slow up under that pressure," cautioned Billy. The brawny old athlete certainly could take it. One hour and thirty-seven minutes, with all of us breathing like steeple chasers at the end of a long run! Henri Mallard, our friend with a camera, was climbing all over the boat. Mentally we four men were fighting the fish just as hard as his feminine captor was. Then the tension eased a bit. "I, I think he's coming in," she gasped.

Finally, the body of the marlin floated up. Mrs. Sutton got a turn of the double line on the spool. Many a fish has been lost at the last minute, however, by accident or carelessness, and Billy was taking no chances. The needle pointed gaff swept out, a skillful jerk, and it was "lights out" for as noble a quarry as any angler ever hooked. It proved to be the largest marlin ever caught at Sydney Heads, the first ever caught there by

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a woman, and the first black marlin landed by a woman in Australia.

But, as five enthusiastic press photographers impatiently posed victor and vanquished on Watson's Bay Wharf that evening, I saw the little Grandmother's eyes moisten as she glanced up at her beautiful prize, and heard her murmur, "It is wonderful, but I am sorry it had to die!"

## "NIGGER FISHIN' " FOR TUNA

*The fog is as thick as a batch of bread,  
Your fingers are numb, and your nose is red,  
You think of home, and a warm little bed,  
And wonder if all of the fish aren't dead.*

*The line snaps taut, your float pops off,  
You hear the engine splutter and cough,  
You slip your anchor, and then you're off!*

*Out of the harbor, and past the Light,  
The herring nets threaten you, left and right,  
It should be dawn, but it looks like night.*

*Six hours of battle, and back you swing,  
A weary victor, to cheerily sing,  
"Long live His Majesty, Tuna, the King!"*

*—Lays of Old Liverpool.*

WHILE it is generally conceded that Port Aransas is the capital of the tarpon world, the exact location of national tuna headquarters has long been a matter of controversy. Experienced observers would place it on the Atlantic seaboard, at some point between Havana and Halifax. Possibly it varies with the seasons, but one thing is certain, during the month of August, it is not far from Liverpool, Nova Scotia. My handsome friend, David Berkley, who has shot lions in Africa, tigers in Indo China, and wild bulls in Borneo, and who has caught so many big fish that, if laid end to end, they would reach from Boone County, Missouri, to Franz Josef Land, insists that Jordan Ferry is the hub. Personally, I cast my vote for Liverpool Bay. While it is true that this little body of water is so plastered with

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herring nets that it reminds one of an extensive and long standing case of *lichen chronicus simplex*, who ever heard of a horse mackerel on a protein free diet?

Herring and albacore always travel together, fin in fin, as it were. Mackerel makes a dainty side dish, but the poor little pop-eyed herring is to the giant tuna what the potato is to the Irishman, and Scotch whiskey to the Britisher.

In choosing the title for this brief essay, I am using the words of my colored house-man, a fine representative of a loyal and devoted race. When I described to him our method of contacting, I cannot say taking, this handsome game fish, for on my 1936 "expedition" I failed to land a specimen, he said, "Why Doctah, that's just plain nigger fishin'!"

At the Truskett Rip, off South Wedgeport, these fish can be caught trolling, but at all other points in Nova Scotia, so far as I know, still fishing is the only successful method. Several years ago, when the beautiful giants were a bit crude and uncultured, they would take a herring or a mackerel hooked most any old way. But nowadays the big fellows are more sophisticated, and an educated and skeptical tuna certainly is a thorn in the flesh of an ambitious and impatient angler.

One cold Monday morning, for three hours my two boatmen and I vainly endeavored to delude a huge, but apparently friendly gargantuan into taking a hand picked mackerel with a shiny 14/0 hook in it. Finally, after feeding the old boy more than a bushel of fat herring, he became so appreciative that he got to scratching his back on the bottom of our boat. It was then that we discovered the cause of his coyness. He

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was trailing five yards of vom Hofe stainless steel trace, which protruded from the left corner of his mouth! We could see the shank of the hook, and as we knew the length of the leader, and the fish was a nice, plump one, we judged our visitor to be some ten feet long, and about half a ton in weight. Certainly a caller worth cultivating!

But the old rascal would have none of us. We tried in various ways to "de-educate" him, as it were. We fastened bits of string to our herring, hoping to work him up to the point where he would ignore a thin wire leader. But suspicious tidbits of all sorts were loftily ignored. Remove a herring or mackerel from the hook, and it would promptly be engulfed, in plain view of the now semi-apopleptic observers. Finally, the fish departed. But the next day he called on Bob Fellows, a New York friend of mine, and Bob and his boatman gave him another generous breakfast, consisting of two bushels of herring, but without iron.

Fishing of this sort is done in the early morning, from four to eleven o'clock. At Liverpool, the Hotel Mersey, for nearly two score years owned and operated by the charming Butler family, is the angler's Mecca. Finer food, and better or more gracious service is to be had nowhere else in the entire Dominion. Probably more and larger fish have been landed on the cool and spacious veranda of this Hotel than off any other dock in the world. Early breakfast is served at 3:30, and one starts out, through the fog and rain, cheered and fortified, and ready for a hard morning's work. The air is chilly, as well as moist, and the wise angler provides himself with heavy woolen underwear, oilskins, and hip boots.

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The question of tackle is one which each individual must decide for himself, but at both Liverpool and Jordan Ferry one is liable to snag almost anything, and it is better to be safe than sorry. Personally, I think plenty of line advisable, from 700 to 1200 yards, and I prefer 54 thread to 39. In 1937, R. S. Schenk, of East Orange, conquered his 800-pound prize on a 36 thread, and in 1935, Roy Haines, of Washington, D. C., whipped a 700-pounder on 30 thread, but, for peace of mind, and mental comfort, I would prescribe 54. Seventy-two thread I think too heavy. Take your tackle with you. Few articles can be procured in Nova Scotia, and these only at top prices.

Reels, always clean and well oiled, should be of at least 12/0, better 14/0, size. During the past season, I saw gear of this sort in a dozen different makes. Personally, when it comes to large reels, I favor those of the "cradle" type. They are much handier and far less cumbersome. All of my five fish, varying from 462 to 765 pounds, were landed on a cradle type Kovalovsky and a 14/0 cradle type vom Hofe.

The question of suitable boats is a burning one in Nova Scotia. The sport is yet in its infancy here, and while all of the guides are experienced fishermen, and skilled engineers, many of the charter craft look like battle scarred nightmares going somewhere to be dreamed. But the engines, be they 1926 Dodges, or 1928 Chevrolets, or 1930 Buicks, all run, and, practically speaking, what more can even the dilettante ask? A few prominent anglers, as Kip Farrington, and Michael Lerner, prefer to work from dories. They claim it is much easier to clear a net in a dory. But a dory is a tricky little craft, and the average individual, particu-



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larly if he be elderly or plump, will do just as well, and feel a whole lot safer and more comfortable, in a 36 foot cruiser.

The beginner should not, and the experienced tuna fisherman will not, have anything to do with a boat that is not equipped with a strong and dependable chair, and a bowl-shaped cockpit. The thigh muscles supply most of the power in fighting a big fish. In 1936, I used a Liverpool boat that was equipped with a so-called "aeroplane chair." The seat was cocked high up in the air, the only fighting purchase the angler had was by bracing his feet against a slender iron rail, raised four inches above the deck! A giant could not have successfully battled an athletic cockroach from that precarious roost, as I discovered, after I had lost five big tuna in succession. I took the boat because I had confidence in the Captain, Lance Nickerson, who, however, was not the owner. That my confidence was not misplaced was proved the following season, when Lance, his mate, Clarence, and I landed four out of seven fish hooked. The three that escaped ran into the net, and broke off. One old reprobate took 700 yards of new 54 thread with him. I trust it did not discommode him, for he gave us an hour of thrills as a rebate.

The chances of hooking a fish are better when one anchors among the nets. But the chances of losing it are also considerably enhanced. In 1936, one of my little pets ran beneath five nets, back-trailed, and burned the line on the anchor rope of the last one, going out! That's hard luck.

This season, at Eagle Head Bay, a fish missed the nearby moorings, but found one, and only God knows how, far out at sea. I felt the line strike it, and eased the

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tension. After a long run, we regained as much line as possible. Some 500 feet from the swivel, we found the "burned" spot. The line was a 39 thread "Celebrated," and two strands were broken! When the fish dashed forward, I would ease the drag. The minute I was back on sound line, I would sit on it! An hour and forty minutes of this sort of thing, and the big boy succumbed. But it was no fun. What little hair I had was standing straight up on my head.

My third fish, a stockily built little rascal of about five hundred pounds, was caught in Eagle Head Bay, near the Coffman Island light, early in the morning, on August 13. We were anchored at the end of the outside net. The big albacore appeared unable to make up its mind as to what it wanted to do. Three different times it headed toward the chain of nets along the shore line, and each time Lance manipulated the boat in such a way that the athletic pace-maker was squeezed out, and his nose pointed ocean-ward. Finally, the old bird high-tailed it toward Cape Breton and points north. We were greatly relieved. But an hour later, complications developed. The fish had been dragging the boat backward. There was a heavy sea. About every three minutes, I would take on a lap full of cold salt water. But my boots protected me, and the exercise kept me warm.

We did not appear to be making much progress. "What's the matter, back there?" "You hitched to a rock?" queried the skipper. I pumped, and pumped, and pumped, until my back ached, and my eyeballs fairly stuck out. "Line's certainly fast to something!" I shouted back. Clarence took the wheel, and Nickerson climbed on the poop. Apparently, we were firmly anchored, with about five hundred feet of line out. The fog was so thick

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that you could have cut it into blocks, and built an Esquimaux house out of it. Lance pulled and hauled at the improvised picket rope. He swore a little bit, which is unusual for Lance. Foot by foot, and yard by yard, the line was hauled in. Not a quiver could be felt at the far end. At last we were rewarded! A nice, fat tuna, eight feet and six inches long, and weighing 497 pounds, hooked in the cheek, but with the line tightly wrapped around the tail, and stone dead!

For floats, nothing is better than four-inch globes of Balsa wood, covered with several coats of paint. My brother, Dr. W. P. Sutton, made mine, and they proved invaluable. They are attached just above the swivel, with a bit of twine. When the fish hits, the float goes down, then snaps off, leaving a free line.

My last tuna of the season was caught near the mouth of Liverpool Bay. We had gone out early, but not many fish were "breaking," or "breaching," as it is called in New Zealand. Bob Fellows, who was to register, in a big way, within a few hours, was anchored nearby, and Smith Schenk not far away. Roy Haines and his guardian angel, Lady Jo, with Captain Purdy, their skipper, were far up in the Bay, and right among the nets. Roy, one of the most enthusiastic of anglers, was to lose two fish that eventful day, and successfully land two. Schenk was to make tuna history, with an eight hundred pounder, before luncheon. Two weeks afterward, John S. Martin, of "Time" and "Life," hooked his 821 pound record fish at almost exactly this same spot.

We were joking, and calling to each other across the water. Our boat ran out of chum, and we slipped our anchor, and skipped over to get more herring from an acquaintance, in a nearby dory. Scarcely had we re-

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turned to our mooring when I got a tremendous strike. The red "bobber" went under, at least 20 feet. I hit, and hit hard. Ralph Kitchin, my guest for the day, quickly got in his line, Clarence tossed our anchor marker over, Lance, who is as quick as a wildcat, had the engine started, and we were off! You do not "manage" a big tuna. The fish manages you! When the road is clear, you ease the old war horse along, when obstacles show up on the horizon, you squeeze down on him, hoping and praying that your line will not encircle a mooring rope, or get wound around a loose lobster pot. After a recent battle at Shelburne, an eminent woman angler from Gotham discovered that she had been pumping on an old lobster trap, together with 700 pounds of albacore, for quite some time. A wee bit distressing, to say the least.

This time, my fish started straight out to sea. My utmost efforts failed to influence him very much, but I manfully pumped away, and we ran up to within about 200 yards. At no time did I feel that I was gaining ground. A mile off shore, we met one of the big pulp wood steamers. Fortunately, we missed it. The crew waved encouragingly from the deck. An hour later, and I was about all in. I was giving the big fellow everything I had, but I am no longer young, and not as resilient as I once was. The double line at last, and was I glad!

But only for a moment, then out again. We see-sawed, back and forth, with first the man, then the fish, on top. Victory for the angler at last, but only after Lance also had been called to bat. This barred the fish from the season record class, but probably saved my life. When the battle ended, I was trembling like a leaf, my pulse was a hundred and thirty, and I was about all in. But I had my fish!

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In Jordan Bay, the nets are located near the shore and seldom worry the angler. Here, I should judge that not one fish out of five is lost in this way. In Liverpool Harbor, and also at Eagle Head Bay, nearby, there are scores of nets, set in every conceivable position. As a result, tuna are more plentiful, owing to the abundance of food, but at least three fish out of every five are lost by becoming entangled in the twine barriers. One of my friends, Dr. George Morse, of Boston, once lost three in one morning.

At Jordan Ferry, I found excellent accommodations in the modern home of Captain Cecil Baptiste. He and his uncle, Captain Bush, and Bush's sons all are excellent boatmen, as are also the Bower brothers, and Captail Miller. Ronald Bower and his father, an old Banks fisherman, were my guides at the Ferry. They were very courteous and accommodating, and nothing was too much trouble for them. Here, as at Liverpool, August is the best month, although in 1937, the first tuna run was in July.

David Berkley, Francis Low and his wife, and other eminent big game anglers, as Brinkley, of Texas, and the Farringtons, of Long Island, all have been wonderfully successful at Jordan Ferry. The resort is one which deserves a place on the itinerary of every visitor.

## AUSTRALIAN SHARKS

**F**EW American anglers consider the shark a game fish. But very few of them have ever met and crossed swords with a mako, or a first class tiger. It was that master fisherman of the world, Zane Grey, who first got me interested in the capture of these gargantuan monsters by means of rod and reel, and later, association with such men as Errol Bullen, Billy Love, Sil Rohu, and Max Lawson has served to further whet my appetite for strong dishes of this sort.

Of all the Australasian members of the shark family, the mako, or "blue pointer," comes first. The mako is a sporting fish, in the best sense of the word. The first one I ever saw hooked, near Cape Brett, Bay of Islands, in February, 1935, put on an acrobatic performance worthy of any circus star. Lady Broughton, of London, one of the world's most expert rod-woman, was the fortunate captor, and it was a privilege to watch her handle that fish.

Mako are found in the waters of Japan, the Philippines, and the islands of the South Seas, and while New Zealand at present holds the record for size, there is no telling when some Tasman Sea enthusiast will wrest it from her.

Makos are caught trolling as well as by drifting, and when a big mako hits your surface bait, you will know there is something doing. It is as if a speckled wildcat, a tropical hurricane, and a runaway horse, all rolled into one, had decided to swallow the finny little helpmate at the end of your line. Generally, the attack is as unexpected as it is violent. You are indeed fortunate if your

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brake is lightly set, and you have a good grip on the handle of your rod. Australian anglers guard against near tragedies of this sort by attaching the butts of their rods to the swivel socket by means of a stout, removable metal pin, a most admirable precaution, which makes for comfort as well as for safety.

Shark teeth are hard on leaders, or "traces," even leaders made of stainless steel-cable. Errol Bullen, who is the star shark sport fisherman of Australasia, has devised a trace which I consider ideal. The hook is a single one, never treble, such as the monstrosities used in some other parts of the world, and of large size, 14/0 or 16/0. It is attached to a 5 foot section of plough steel cable. Cable of this sort is "shark tooth proof." Then comes a powerful galvanized swivel, to which is fastened a 30 foot flexible steel trace, ending in a second large swivel. At intervals along the main leader are fixed strong, oval wooden buttons. These almond shaped appendages are of tremendous service when it comes to handling a big fish at the finish. I shall use these traces hereafter on Nova Scotia tuna. They may be procured from Sil Rohu, Sydney.

In order of merit, I should class South Sea sharks as mako, hammerhead, tiger, thresher, black whaler, bronze whaler, white pointer, grey nurse, and wabbagong, or carpet sharks.

The wabbagong is the most beautiful, the mako the most athletic, and the tiger the most ferocious.

The thresher possesses eyes of extraordinary size. My friend, Jack Mowlem, of Tauranga, Bay of Plenty, showed me a pair of preserved thresher eyes that were considerably larger than big coffee cups.

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Sharks haunt the beaches of Sydney side. For many years, in fact until 1935, I had thought man eating fish of this sort were figments of the imagination. I have since learned that they are very substantial figments. During the Summer season, in New South Wales, a week seldom passes without one or more shark fatalities on the bathing beaches. So great is the danger that all of the principal surfing resorts are now protected by heavy Page steel netting, and, in addition, on holidays and at week ends, two hydroplanes, manned by trained observers, patrol the shore line. From a plane, a big fish can be seen far beneath the water. The moment a shark is discovered, the aerial watcher rings a bell, to attract the attention of the bathers, and then drops red paper streamers into the sea. At all of the urban beaches it is unlawful to swim outside the barrier nets, and a constable is on hand to see that the rule is obeyed.

Fortunately, the majority of sharks are comparatively slow swimmers. They love to loaf about in the quiet pools, and pick up what food they can without too much exertion. If they were ambitious, the good Lord only knows what inroads they might make on Sydney surfers.

Billy Love, who has probably captured more big sharks than any other man in the world, has great respect for their strength, and fighting ability. He goes out after them alone, in a small boat, using a hand line. For years he has supplied the Taronga Park zoo with all its pets of this sort. Some varieties, as grey nurses, appear to thrive in captivity. While they never become affectionate or cuddly, they do appear to appreciate attention, and plentiful supplies of appetizing tucker. The tigers, on the other hand, are untameable. They sulk, and mope, and refuse to eat. When dear Mr. Howard Brown, the



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Secretary, a man that every animal in the zoo admires and loves, attempts to sympathize with a tiger shark, about all he gets is a dirty look. I suspect he would make a better impression were he a bit plumper, but it may be I am wrong. The intellect of a tiger shark is microscopic, but it is hard to fathom.

I once asked Billy which he had rather lose while fishing, an arm or a leg. "When they take me," declared Billy, "I want to go in head first." And Billy ought to know.

Sil Rohu recommends the use of "chum," or "Burley," as it is called in Australia. Shark flesh makes excellent bait. Love once brought in a nine-foot whaler. It was too small for Taronga, so he stowed it on the wharf, and later gave it to a friend who planned to wet a line. The gentleman decided he would like to try for the big brutes by night. That afternoon, he packed his gear, tied the nine footer behind his boat, and set out for a popular fishing hole, about two and a half miles southeast of North Head. The water here is about forty fathoms deep, and covers a reef which fairly swarms with snapper. Several huge sharks have been caught there.

The sun was just setting as the anchor was thrown over the side. There was a commotion at the rear end of the boat, and the little craft keeled far to port. The sportsman rushed back into the cockpit, and looked over the stern. A tiger shark that appeared to be fully eight yards long had almost completely engulfed the five hundred pound bait fish. The wicked jaws snapped together, and all that was left was a foot and a half of tail! The angler was horrified, and almost panic stricken. He tremblingly hoisted anchor, and hit the road for home.

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The spot where this big fish was seen is known as "The Cottages," owing to the fact that one of the bearings takes in a couple of cottages over Rosie Gully, but whether one fishes there, or near Macquarie Light, or off Manly Beach, the chances are always excellent for a big shark. Zane Grey's record catch of a 1,036 pound tiger still holds good, but Rohu has caught a 1,005 pounder, and Errol Bullen a string of monsters, weighing up to nearly 1,000 pounds each. If all of the sharks that Errol Bullen has landed on that pet level winding reel and cane and hickory rod of his were placed end to end they would reach from Sydney Heads to Singapore. To me, it seems a tragedy that his sport is restricted to two or three days a week. Only the fact that it is good for twelve months in the year saves me from tears. To hear Errol talk, one might think him the most overworked man in the whole world. But, thanks to his interest in fine tackle, and superb fishing craft, and to the multitude of man eaters that haunt Sydney Heads, I expect, and hope, to see him attain a ripe and happy old age. A finer, keener sportsman it would be hard to find.

In a recent story, Zane Grey graphically describes his method of fighting large fish of this sort. He believes in treating them tenderly, and, after gently leading them up to the boat, sticking a gargantuan stainless steel gaff through the northeast corner of their gizzards.

If any man in the world knows how to do it, Zane Grey should, and it probably is sacrilege for a poor, unsophisticated little neophyte like me to differ with him, but I am a great believer in putting up a strong and aggressive fight, right from the kick-off. Do not hook them too early; wait until the football bladder that is used as a float has been under the surface for several

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minutes, and the bait has been swallowed. When you think it has landed in the varmint's oozy-goozelum, so to speak, hit him. And hit hard. After that, it is largely a question of main strength and manly skill. The anchor is hoisted, the engine started, and you may rest assured that a happy and busy hour lies ahead of you. All of the Hoag rods that I used at Bermagui and at Sydney Heads held up perfectly, and they were flexible enough to have plenty of spring—I hate a “dead” rod—but each and every one of them quickly acquired a “permanent wave” that it will carry to the end of its days.

One of the most valuable and interesting features of Australian shark fishing is its dependability. You can always catch them, be it wet or dry, rough or calm, every day in the month, twelve months in the year. They are there, awaiting you, always hungry, and always ready to give battle.

It is not a sport to be recommended for children, but it is one which should have a strong appeal to every red-blooded big game angler.





